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ZIGZAG

THE ROCK MAG

NUMBER 66 NOVEMBER 1976



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ZIGZAG 66

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I tell you, getting Zigzag out on time every month is killing me. In fact, so weakened has my constitution become as a result of adhering to our rigorous publication schedule that I have reluctantly decided to hand over 75% of my duties to younger and more virile persons. In all seriousness, we are looking for suitable types to relieve me of my editorial and layout duties.

If you fancy assuming the bulk of editorial control and think you have the requisite background, knowledge and experience - drop a line to our North Marston address. If you fancy having a go at the layout, please write to Graham Andrews at Prestagate Ltd., 10 Kennet St., Reading.

What I have in mind is not only returning my debilitated body to a plausible physical and mental condition, but also injecting a bit more young blood into Zigzag (or "the old warhorse" as Giovanni Dadomo so affectionately calls it). I mean, let's face it - the layout, which was never more than pedestrian at the best of times, has become rather tedious in its simplicity. We want a bit more sparkle and some new ideas.

If you're interested, get writing - but remember that although the prestige of working on Zigzag is enormous, the bread is terrible... So if you're more excited by money than music - don't bother to apply.

Right...before I get on to the contents of this month's superdooper issue, I'd better trot out the usual excuses. The next chapter of the Joel Scott Hill story is being held over due to space restrictions, the final part of the Warren Zevon story will have to wait until next month because the ancient mariner hasn't finished re-writing it to my satisfaction, and the last part of the Ian Matthews chronicle is missing because Tobler (or Johnny Reggae as he is now known) has spent the whole month writing a book on Bob Marley. Following his exhaustive researches, Tobler is now one of the world's leading authorities on Jamaica, its history and cultures...he goes around in a taffeta hat singing the 'Banana Boat Song' all day. A remarkable transformation, because until about six weeks ago, he thought Bob Marley was a character in 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens.

This month sees the return of two ex-regulars to the Zigzag pages: Trevor Gardiner and Andy 'Lazybones' Childs. Trevor brings us the latest gossip from the BE-BOP DELUXE camp, which will not only placate and gratify the many readers who see Bill Nelson as the new Messiah, but will also provide a most picturesque and pearly toothed cover. At least, it would have done, but despite tenacious attempts to get a suitable colour snap of Billy boy, his apparently disinterested publicist could only come up with two particularly unremarkable "say cheese" shots which even Disc would have rejected.

Childs, in a spectacular spate of activity which will no doubt leave him bereft of energy until Christmas, managed to transcribe and write up the interview he did with JESSE WINCHESTER this summer. Before the rains came. Take it easy, old feller - you might strain that small muscle in your arm.

Is it not about time I mentioned the sterling work of our fine photographers? Due to his excessive intake of Young's Beer, the spherical -stomached Tommy Cheyenne can only get one photo in a hundred to come out clearly. All the others are wonky, out of focus, obscured by fingers or lens caps, too dark or have the subjects head cut off.

Then there's the spiffing Chalkie Davies, whose pix so often grace the NME. Chalkie is the Tobler of the Kodak...he works 83 hours a day. Like he came on the phone just now and asked if I wanted a photo of the Runaways: "I've taken 750", he said! (I put him on to Needsy).

I like THE STRANGLERS, and would like them even more were it not for the fact that the weeklies' disproportionate milking of the p*nk rock fad has given me a psychological aversion to any of those street urchin outfits. Actually, the Strangers are a cut above 95% of the bands you see in the London pubs these days...it's just a shame that they've got to swim a lot harder to get away from the lesser talents they've been bracketed with. I mean the Sex Pistols (who drew the magnificent total of 95 people to the Civic Hall in Dunstable this week) have the same kind of attraction as a nasty road accident, and they seem to be aiming at an audience of remarkably low brain power. Anyway, this somewhat unwieldy paragraph is supposed to be an introduction to Kris Needs' piece on the afore-mentioned Strangers. (As we go to press, Needs has just returned from a lost weekend with Patti Smith, Lenny Kaye, the Clash and a gentleman with the unlikely-sounding name of Sid Vicious. Not surprisingly, he hasn't recovered sufficiently to talk about it yet).

The mention of p*nk and Patti Smith brings us neatly along to the eminent BBC producer John Walters, who enters our pages to thrust his red-hot quill twixt the buttocks of young Patti, among others. Walters, from his invidious vantage point as a Civil Service scene-maker and trend setter, looks out across the pop scene with an unruffled resignation - and his observations are to become a regular feature of "the world's greatest rock magazine".

One of Mac's 'pernicious influence' poll entries named "TED NUGENT...who must be completely mad, as well as completely deaf". Not so, screams the raging and demented Paul Kendall, who maintains that Nugent has few peers in the entire universe. Is Kendall going off the rails, we ask ourselves? Having left Oxford clutching unprecedented diplomas and citations for his theses on literary matters, he now pushes the pen in praise of Ted Nugent! Has the world gone mad? Is Armageddon nigh?

Finally, as I write this, it is ten years to the very day since Grace Slick joined the Jefferson Airplane. What better time to dash out an interview with Paul Kantner (done by a ZZ newcomer, Ian Birch...Hi, Ian) and a JEFFERSON STARSHIP family tree (if I can get the bloody thing finished in time)?

See you at the Jackson Browne concerts.

Pete

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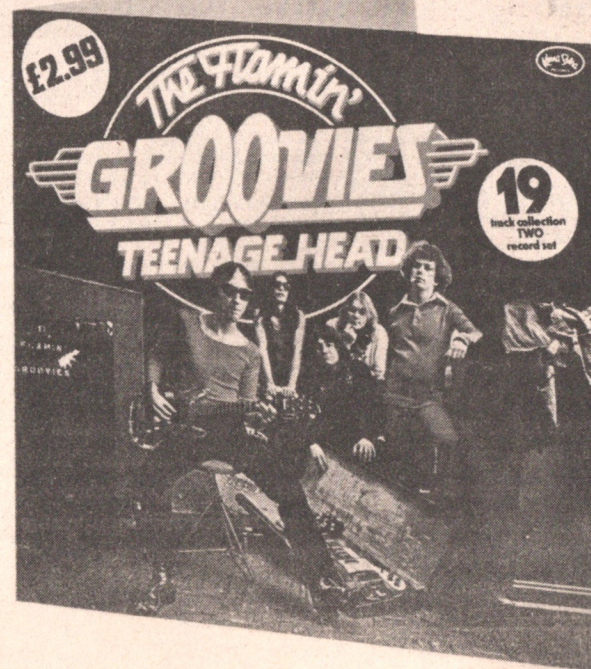
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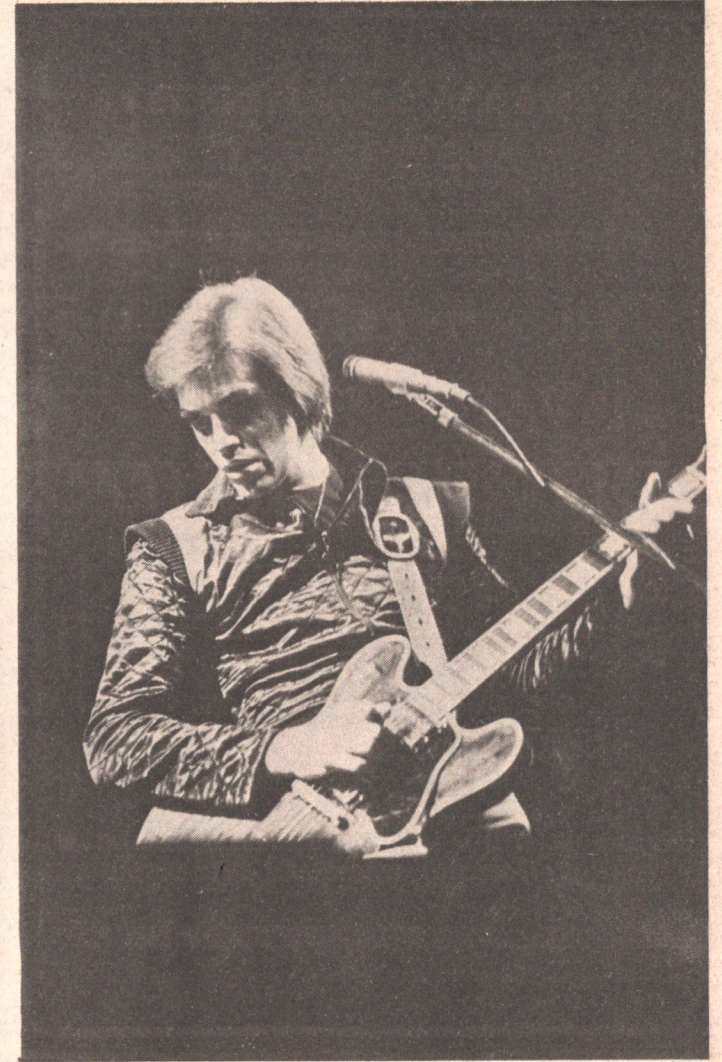
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BILL NELSON AND HIS MODERN MUSIC

**Plugging in where his historical perspective
in Zigzag 56 left off, Trevor Gardiner re-opens the Be-Bop file**

It came as an unexpected, though pleasant surprise to see Be-Bop Deluxe on Top Of The Pops earlier this year, and I must say that I for one was really pleased that 'Ships In The Night' (Harvest HAR 5104), the single taken from their last album 'Sunburst Finish' (SHSP 4053), did as well as it did. Not that singles are the be all and end all of everything, but in Be-Bop's case it proved useful in providing them with a considerable amount of extra exposure and in giving the album a hefty boot up the charts. Recorded towards the end of 1975 at Abbey Road and Air Studios, 'Sunburst Finish' was co-produced by Bill Nelson and John Leckie, an engineer who first worked with Bill on the Abbey Road sessions for 'Axe Victim'. The partnership obviously proved the most successful so far and they've now got together again to produce the band's fourth album 'Modern Music' (SHSP 4058).

'Sunburst Finish' was a typical Nelson flight of imagination, a superb collage of humour, science fiction, romance and more personal subjects,

masked behind lyrics which range from the blatantly obvious to the curiously obscure. 'Modern Music' continues along these lines, delightfully ambiguous in places and once again liberally sprinkled with romantic imagery. Not surprisingly, the musical texture of the two albums are similar, the furious guitar passages of 'Futurama' having now given way to a more melodic approach which, nevertheless, still retains enough aggression to keep the adrenalin flowing.

As far back as late '75, when Be-Bop were still living the nocturnal life at Abbey Road, recording 'Sunburst Finish', Bill was already thinking ahead to the next album. He has a characteristic dislike of the machinations of the music business, and possibly, he said, they'd do something which would tell the life-story of the band. This would give him ample opportunity to have his say, although if, as he suggested, he'd mentioned all the people who've ripped him off in the past, he'd probably end up on the wrong end of a libel suit. Then there was the idea, already started

with 'Adventures In A Yorkshire Landscape' from 'Axe Victim', of devoting maybe half an album to various impressions of his native Yorkshire.

As it happens, neither of these have materialized. Instead the concept format has almost, though not entirely, been disregarded in favour of a more flexible mixture of songs. There is, however, one pervading influence on side two of the album, and that is Bill's not altogether starry-eyed impressions of America, from where they'd just returned after their first tour. The omnipresent accessibility of standard US rocklife temptations - groupies, cocaine and all-night parties - don't really hold much of an attraction for him, and the greeting which one young American offered him on arrival in the country - "Hi Bill, d'ya want some quaaludes?" - seemed to set the tone for the tour. Not that all his impressions were bad, but as far as the aspects he was closest to were concerned, i.e. the music biz, it wasn't exactly heaven. His attitude may sound a bit sour, but a first American

tour for a virtually unknown band is no holiday, and having to pose at receptions and parties for the press in every city isn't really his cup of tea anyway. At one grand reception in their honour, where everybody was seated at a long table draped with a white tablecloth, nobody even bothered to come and speak to them. The band responded by drawing caricatures of the people around them on the tablecloth, while the dumbfounded leeches, between mouthfuls of food and expensive booze, tried to figure out what was going on. When the band left, everyone rushed over to see what they'd been doing.

While the accompanying formalities may have been a bit too much for Bill though, the audiences were great. Be-Bop appeared to have a fairly sizeable following in the States, particularly around the West Coast, and when I spoke to him recently he seemed well pleased with the receptions they'd received.

"Yes, the gigs were great. They're so kind of alive the audiences over there, they don't just sit and politely applaud after every number. I'd read all the reports of how Cockney Rebel had really bombed there, and before we went people told us not to be frightened if we got booed off, and I was getting really worried about what to do if that happened. I was thinking of all these quick asides and witty things to say to the hecklers, which I no doubt would have forgotten when I got up on stage. But it didn't happen once, in fact we went down a storm even when there were really strong headlines on, like Johnny Winter.

"The Los Angeles gig was the best one, at the Santa Monica Civic, supporting Golden Earring. We were very nervous, because all the Capitol Records people (Be-Bop's US label) and all the media people were there, and we were all trying to keep calm and pretend it wasn't a prestige gig, although obviously it was. It was really good though - when we walked on stage the whole audience stood up and gave us an ovation before we'd even played a note, and afterwards they did the whole thing where they light matches and you see nothing but all these little burning matches in the darkness".

The success of the tour was encouraging and as a result they ended up extending it by another three weeks, supporting a number of top American acts, including the superbly bizarre Tubes, who we'll hopefully be seeing over here soon. They also performed a number of gigs with that goddess of the Bowery, Patti Smith. Like Bill's, her lyrics have come in for some pretty close examination from rock 'critics', so maybe Bill felt some kind of affinity with her in the way that they both attach at least equal importance to the poetic construction of their lyrics as they do to the music.

"Well, when I first saw her perform, we all thought she was a good performer. We couldn't really hear much of what she was doing, it was difficult to pick out words, but her whole stage presence was pretty strong. But then I sat back and looked at it afterwards and I thought well, how durable is it in terms of a lasting experience? And it isn't - it's a very temporary thing. It's kind of almost the thing to be doing at the moment. As for her lyrics, I've not gone into them that much, so I suppose it's not really fair to judge, but I've seen her

do improvisational things, and I don't like it that much. I've not heard anything that's convinced me that she's what she's cracked up to be. But then I might be saying that because she slated us! She made some really horrible comment in Melody Maker about us being clinical Hendrix copies or something, which shows she's deaf for a start.

"I think a lot of people have said good things about her and really they aren't quite aware what it's about. I'm sure a lot of people who say they like her lyrics don't really know what her lyrics are about, or even what she says half the time, you know, she just waits it all out. It's just a whole kind of event that she puts on at a gig. There's a definite rapport there with the audience, but it's a rather decadent, sort of sad thing".

Did he think, I wondered, that people understood his lyrics?

"Ha ha. I don't know. Well, they're easy enough. I don't think there's anything complex in them image-wise. I use images that are stock images that people can relate to, it's just a mixture of them that might be a bit different to someone else's. I've got things at home, the meaning of which is probably lost even to myself - things that I've written down because I've felt strongly about the words that I've used. Each word has a certain fascination or power for me when I've written it down, and it hasn't necessarily made a kind of order or sense in a literal sense, and these are the things I don't often use for our song lyrics.

"There's a song on the new album called 'Twilight Capers' which is a trap for Jonh Ingham! Well, no, it's not really - it's just that he did a review of the last album in Sounds, and he went on about 'Blazing Apostles' being 'perhaps the most interesting song on this album... an impressionistic walk not unlike the hotel corridor in 'Blood Of A Poet'. The funny thing was that whole track was just a throw-away lyrically. Whereas I'd been writing songs that were meaningful to me on a personal level, like 'Sister Seagull', which was a kind of romantic thing where I was really wanting to express this inner feeling, 'Blazing Apostles' was just me standing off something and looking at it in a humorous way. Like it's about the whole commercialisation of religion, just setting it in the context of being a motorised evangelistic crusade that went round saving people, only they were so corrupt that if you didn't feel you were sinful enough to need saving, then they'd sell you the sin first and save you afterwards.

"The whole band just laughed when we read the review of that track, and I thought it would be really nice to put one song on this album that would be totally vacuous as far as content goes. The words 'All the white horses ran bleeding to the end/Shot through the heart by dear devoted passion...' well they were just lines that I wrote for the sake of the words and the pictures they put in my mind, without being based on anything at all. It's just nice words that sounded nice at the time, and there's just one clue that it's a joke. You remember the detective series 'Dragnet'? And the theme tune, every time anything dramatic happened it went 'dan, da dan dan - daan!! Well, at the beginning of the song there's the opening chords, almost

semi-classical chords, and then it goes 'dan da dan dan!', just that little part. But it's a bit of a giveaway - I mean, anyone who puts a quote from 'Dragnet' into a song with lyrics apparently as heavy as that, has just got to be kidding!

"But if Jonh Ingham does see it as being some kind of Cocteau-influenced surrealism or whatever, then that's what it is, and if somebody else sees it as being a joke, then it is that tool I just want it to be ambiguous and therefore any interpretation is valid. So I could never turn round and say 'Fooled you, it's not about that', because it's about whatever anybody sees in it".

The fact remains though, that it is frequently only too easy to read several different interpretations into some of Bill's songs, simply because he seldom writes anything in straight factual terms. Through his use of imagery he will often disguise the motivations behind a song with colourful little symbols which, taken at face value, seem pretty straightforward. But looking through the external symbolism, you'll invariably find something quite different lurking beneath - it's almost as though it's written in his own private code. The only trouble with this sort of thing is that it's often difficult to know exactly how far to go - look too hard and you'll probably see something that wasn't there in the first place.

Most of 'Modern Music' is fairly straightforward - the first group of five tracks on side two quite openly display Bill's reactions to the fast lifestyle of America; the bright lights and fast cars and, I suspect, his separation from friends at home, particularly his girlfriend, to whom the album is dedicated. "This jet-age life is getting worse/I feel I'm half a universe away.../I left my home some time ago/To fight the creatures of the USA..." - couldn't be more simple. But then look at 'Orphans Of Babylon' and you'll see what I mean about ambiguity. (I'm not quoting any more lyrics - this is already looking too much like a degree course on T.S. Eliot - so you'll have to buy the album!)

Doesn't it bother him though, that people often interpret his lyrics in a way that he had not originally intended when he wrote them?

"No, because the whole point of writing a song is for me to get rid of an idea out of myself so it stops bugging me, not to put an idea across to somebody. It's like being haunted by an idea or a feeling and the only way I can exorcise it is to get it out in a song, or a painting or whatever. So, once it's out it doesn't really matter whether people understand it or not, as long as it's out of my system. It's probably a bit selfish to do it that way, but if I didn't I'm sure I'd get very ill - very strange in the head or something".

How does he define poetry then?

"It's many things really. Sometimes it's actually a direct expression - one person having an idea that they wish to communicate to others - and it's just a direct description, or whatever, but it gets that feeling across. But there are times when the writer, rather than putting his idea across, is more of the key that opens the door in the person that's reading or hearing it, and he's as much in the dark as to what's behind that door as the person that actually possesses the door. I think when it works on that level it's the most mystical, the purest level of

poetry perhaps".

A bit like abstract art isn't it?

"Yes, abstract art works on the same level. Art of that nature is still communicating, in the majority of cases, a definite form that has been transmuted into another form. You know, something that was concrete turned into abstract through a process of transmutation. But then the symbolist painters, the Pre-Raphaelites, they had an apparent reality on the surface, but the significance is underneath that. The symbolism that comes underneath it is probably deeper than the symbolism of a cold abstract, where it's the result of an almost technical process at times. And that's the sort of thing I'm more interested in, both in painting and writing, where the images are a bit more concrete perhaps, but they have a kind of uncertainty behind them".

Looking through the lyrics of the four Be-Bop Deluxe albums, you can't help noticing that, for some obscure reason, swans and seagulls keep appearing. Lately Bill seems to have developed a penchant for airships too, and there are a number of other less obvious links between their albums. About 18 months ago, when they'd just finished 'Futurama', I asked him about the birds and he seemed to find it quite interesting too, although he wasn't too sure why they kept cropping up in his songs.

"Yes, it's amazing - they must have attracted me. The swan is what I've adopted for my image. My girlfriend's got this thing about seagulls - she collects them, and I collect swans. The swan's supposed to be the symbol of the poet, you know, the Pre-Raphaelite painters used to paint loads of swans - they're supposed to symbolize a kind of innocent beauty".

Well, innocent beauty or not, it's pretty evident that Bill Nelson is a confusingly complex character. During the course of the interview the conversation inevitably ended up on the subject of mysticism, spiritualism, and black and white magic - something in which Bill has always maintained a strong interest. Those regular readers among you will no doubt remember, back in Zigzag 56, Bill mentioning that at one time he got fairly heavily involved with the church. This was when he first met Richard Brown, the original keyboard player with Be-Bop Deluxe who left before 'Axe Victim' was recorded, and together they both played in a band called the Gentle Revolution. Well, it turns out that Bill's been involved in some pretty weird scenes, all of which he recounted with boundless enthusiasm.

"It was a Pentecostal church, and initially I only went because they had a band there called the Messengers (who later became the Gentle Revolution); after the service was over I was introduced to them by a friend, and we had a bit of a jam. So I started going every week just for the jam sessions afterwards, but after a while I began to get interested in the church. It's far more relaxed than an orthodox church where you have an altar and crosses, and they do all these things where they bless you and the Spirit comes upon you. They used to do faith healing and a very frightening thing called speaking in tongues - I'll probably be struck down for talking about it! They do this thing



where the spirit kind of moves people and you'll find people will stand up and start talking in an alien tongue that you've never heard before, and when this happens there's always someone else who's struck by the same thing to stand up and translate. It's an incredible, indescribable feeling and it used to frighten me. It's like a power that's given and it's supposed to be God demonstrating that he is present at the meeting.

"Really weird things would happen - healings, levitations - it was very magical. A lot of what happens in the Pentecostal church is very, very powerful, and if you're a total cynic on the religious level it gives you a lot of questions about the power of the human mind anyway, like supernatural powers in the human body, you know, and how far the powers of the mind can be stretched.

"I had a friend who used to follow Alistair Crowley's doctrines, who used to do very strange things - little miracles, he'd call them. He had this thing where he'd pick up a pair of scissors, hold his hand up and chop his fingers off while we watched. And then we'd look again and they were there. Or we'd be walking along the street and he'd say 'Look at that car!', and suddenly the car's headlights would come on and go off again. There would be no need for them to be on - he'd just make it happen. He did lots of things like that, and he had a white female guardian angel - we're all supposed to have one. There is a ritual you can perform to conjure up

your own guardian angel, and I've got a book at home that tells you how, but I daren't do it!"

The conversation continued through mysterious tales of Bill's past, with stories of ghost hunts, seances and hair-raising accounts of glasses flying off ouija boards. It began to sound more like something out of the 'Exorcist', but for reasons of space, that part of the conversation will have to remain untold here.

So, there you are. An interview as short as this can only give a minimal insight, but I hope that at least it's shown that Bill Nelson is far more than just an average rock musician. For him, art is one boundless act of exorcism, be it through painting, poetry, songwriting or playing guitar.

At the moment Be-Bop are midway through their second tour of the States, having completed their British tour at the end of September, when they were augmented by a second guitarist, Mike Close, an old friend of Bill's from Yorkshire. How they'll stand up to the pressure remains to be seen (they had only a two day rest between the end of the British and the beginning of the American tours), but perhaps the most pressing problem at the moment is the question of their bass player, Charlie Tumahai's permit troubles. His future with the band has been in the balance for some time now, but hopefully the powers that be will see reason and put an end to this ridiculous situation by letting him stay.

Trevor Gardiner.



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Tom Cheyenne

THE ONLY FOOLS ON THE ROAD TONIGHT ARE THE FOOLS ON THE MIDNIGHT BUS

"The next number is by a songwriter who we really like...his name's Jesse Winchester". (A liberal smattering of applause). "Great...you like him too!" That was Paul Bailey of the late lamented Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers introducing 'Midnight Bus' at the Zigzag Fifth Anniversary concert at the Roundhouse one Sunday afternoon in May 1974. Judging by the enthusiastic response which that introduction received, I would have thought that Jesse Winchester's music would be pretty close to the hearts of a lot of Zigzaggers, but even if nobody who reads the rag nowadays went to that concert, how come the man Winchester didn't figure at all in either the 'Favourite Lyricists' or 'Artists You'd Most Like To See Featured in Zigzag' polls recently conducted by Mac? Eh? What's the matter with you all...been brainwashed by all this punk-rock tripe or something? Don't you realise that Jesse Winchester is one of the very best songwriters you'll ever have the privilege of hearing?

Whether you give a monkey's toss or not, I must report that it was my very great honour to meet and interview Jesse Winchester when he made an all-too-brief visit to this country earlier in the year; I also went to see him perform at Dingwalls in London, but due to a high percentage of obnoxious people and various other factors beyond mine or Winchester's control, I derived precious little enjoyment from the evening. However, my respect and admiration for the man is still considerable, especially now that his immaculate fourth album 'LET THE ROUGH SIDE DRAG' is available for the delight of one and all.

Before we begin his story though, you may care to peruse your copy of ZZ48, wherein you will find a pioneering introduction to Winchester's work by Giovanni Dadomo, a man of faultless taste and clear headed perception. (Ed: But isn't he one of the journalists tirelessly touting "this

punk rock tripe"?). Giovanni also interviewed Jesse, about the same time as I did, for Sounds, and as a large part of his transcript wasn't used, he very kindly gave the rest to me for the purposes of this article. So, you bumbleheads out there who've never even heard of Jesse Winchester, pay attention! This one's for you...

Jesse Winchester was born in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1945, and spent most of his childhood in Memphis where his early interest in music was quickly nurtured. By the time he was six years old he'd been given the standard piano lessons, at age twelve he was playing the organ in church, and by fourteen he'd discovered the guitar and rock'n'roll.

"The sort of music that I liked then was 'Shake Rattle & Roll', Hank Williams stuff, and any funky music that you could find...there wasn't much of it until Elvis came along".

After a short stint as guitarist in a friend's band, Jesse went to Massachusetts... "They sent me north to give me an education - a gentleman's education"... and somehow or other he ended up in Munich on the pretense of studying German and Philosophy, but in actual fact spent most of his time playing in a band... "Just a bar band, a little group. They were all German guys, I was the only American. That was about 1965/66. I came back and finished my last year at school and then I went back down to Memphis and played piano in a cocktail lounge for a while, just treading water really".

The above facts, however, pale in comparison to the next event in Jesse's life, one that changed and re-shaped his career completely. He received his draft papers from Mr. Nixon... and that meant a long Cong hunting holiday in Vietnam - something that Jesse didn't really fancy, to say the least. He decided instead, on moral

grounds, to evade bayonetting courses, and fled to Canada.

"It wasn't an immediate decision; I thought about it awhile, but it didn't take me too long to decide. I asked the advice of people I respected and I'd say it took me two weeks to come to a decision. I didn't know anything about Canada, so I looked it up in reference books to find out which were the large cities and how many provinces there were, and so forth, and in this book it said that Montreal was the largest city, so I went there. Anyway, it sounded like the most cosmopolitan, and it is".

Jesse's first musical venture in Montreal was to join a French-Canadian dance group, a short-lived, but interesting collaboration. "Well, I tried to find a straight job at first but I couldn't, so I answered an advertisement in the paper saying that a guitar player was needed - simple as that. It was a good job too - steady; I got \$100 a week every week, which was a godsend. I was with them about six months, during which time I learnt to speak French - ostensibly because none of the guys could speak a word of English, so it was pretty good in that way too".

"The band played some real peculiar gigs...boy, did I see the wilds! I suppose it was good in a way, but I got awfully depressed. Our name was the Astronauts, by the way, and I left because the manager wanted us to dress up in leotards with silver lame, a bikini thing, and a kind of football helmet with antennae. So, in my newly adopted tongue, I bade them 'au revoir'".

"While I was with that band, however, I met loads of other musicians, which was another fringe benefit, and we got together another kind of R&B band, and this was actually a nice little band called the John Cold Water Group. We played a little too jazzy and a little too loud for the

commercial jobs that we got, though, and finally had to break up because we couldn't make any money on it. We played rhythm'n'blues, y'know, Sam & Dave, Otis Redding, and Ray Charles. I was singing and playing guitar, and we had some really good musicians in that band, all of whom are still making good music. Anyway, after that I went on my own, because I was so fed up with the strictures of life in a band".

It had been in Canada that Jesse first started to write his own material, and his decision to go solo gave him the chance to play it. An introduction to Robbie Robertson of the Band, and a subsequent record contract followed with smooth inevitability.

"I met Robbie Robertson in about 1969, I think, in Ottawa. At that point I had written some songs and this friend of mine, who was a deserter from the American army, brought this two-track Ampex recorder up from the States, and we were making a demo tape in the basement of this church. Well, a guy named Gordon Shepherd who was a friend of the guy I was living with, brought Robbie down. The Band had just recorded 'Big Pink' so I was really impressed. Well anyway he suggested I make a demo tape, which he would take to Albert Grossman... and that's what happened".

The results of all this was Jesse Winchester's debut album, just titled 'JESSE WINCHESTER', released in 1970 on the Ampex label, produced by Robbie Robertson and engineered by studio wizard Todd Rundgren.

"We did about ten days to two weeks of recording, then we took the tapes home, listened to them, decided what we liked and what we didn't like, and then came back and did about three more days of revisions and additions. Then Robbie and Todd mixed it - I don't know where they mixed it - I think it was New York. I wasn't in on the mix".

Debut albums often number among the best of any month's record releases, but Jesse Winchester's first has got to be among the most beautifully poignant, warm and inspiring debuts I've ever heard. Ed

Ward in 'Rolling Stone' wrote ecstatically about it saying that "every patriotic American should listen to Jesse Winchester, the man who loved it and left it, because his songs transcend all barriers with the exception of one: art". Melody Maker's Richard Williams was about the first journalist over here to discover him, predicting that "if his first album is anything to go by, Winchester will be a giant before long". (It didn't get released over here until very recently, by the way). Our man Dadomo has discussed the album, along with the two subsequent releases, at great length in the aforementioned article in ZZ48, and as I agree almost totally with his sentiments I will dwell on this most exquisite of albums no longer, except to say that the opening track on side two, 'Yankee Lady', reduces me to warm jelly and leaves me grinning like an idiot. (Ed: I often wondered why you look like that).

Winchester's next album, 'THIRD DOWN, 110 TO GO', arrived approximately two years later, apparently having taken most of that time to make. It's produced by Jesse himself except for three tracks which come from an earlier session produced by Todd Rundgren.

"We tried to make an album, Todd and me. And we did make an album, but it just didn't really work apart from the three tracks I used. Todd comes from a sort of Who tradition, if there is a tradition there, and I'm older than that, and it just didn't work that well. But I think the world of Todd - he's gotta be one of the most talented people I know. So it's no kind of bad reflection on him, it's just the combination".

The critics went suitably potty about the album, which unlike its predecessor did get a fairly immediate release over here. It didn't really move in vast quantities, although in the States it's supposed to have sold more than 100,000 copies. Jesse is, of course, unable to risk returning to the States for fear of being thrown in the draft dodgers' penitentiary, so he's

never had the opportunity to play there on his own and capitalize on his fairly substantial cult figure status.

By way of digression (for all you sports fans), the title 'Third Down 110 To Go' concerns Canadian football. "The title plays on the difference between Canadian and American football. In American football the field is 100 yards long and in Canadian football it's 110. And in American football you get four chances, or four downs, to move the ball ten yards, whereby you earn another four downs to move another ten yards, and so on. In Canadian football you only have three downs to make ten yards, so if it's third down 110 to go, it means you're all the way up the other end of the field and it's your last chance. So it's sort of a desperate situation. If you were in America playing American football you'd be behind your own goal-line". So much for the theories about the title being a reference to the third album having been recorded (the second being the abortive attempt with Rundgren), leaving only 110 to go before the expiry of his contract!

Two other points of interest concerning 'Third Down'. Firstly it contains the legendary 'Midnight Bus' mentioned at the beginning of this article, and secondly it features the exemplary guitar work of Amos Garrett for whom Jesse (and every knowledgeable guitar freak I know) holds the highest regard.

"Todd brought him along to some of those sessions we did; that's how I met him. I don't know what to say about Amos! playing, it's just... the best. A musician's musician, as they say".

In between albums, Jesse continued his modest career of gigging around Canada either alone or with small groups, the most notable of which was a trio called Jesse Winchester and the Rhythm Aces - consisting of drummer Butch McDade and bassist Jeff Davis. When they finally parted company with Jesse they became the Amazing Rhythm Aces along with Barry 'Byrd' Burton, Billy Earhart, James Hooker and Russell Smith, and if you



remember, they had a rather large hit in America last year with a song written by Russell Smith called 'Third Rate Romance'. Smith is the group's principal songwriter (and a very good one at that), and through his association with McDade and Davis, Jesse became aware of him and recorded two of his songs on his own third album 'LEARN TO LOVE IT'.

One of the songs was 'Third Rate Romance'... and while another Winchester album rode waves of critical acclaim that seemed to work in inverse proportion to sales figures, Jesse sat back and watched, with a wry smile, as the Amazing Rhythm Aces' version of 'Third Rate Romance' sailed into the charts approximately one year later. One suspects that his total lack of commercial success doesn't worry Winchester that much (although he says it would enable him to live more comfortably and be able to buy some much needed recording equipment); he's not exactly a prolific writer and four albums in over six years, however good, are hardly enough to keep one bubbling in publicity.

"I'm really slow. I'm naturally lazy, plus I haven't been tremendously successful in financial terms, so there's not an awful lot of pressure from the company for me to produce more records... and without that pressure I don't do anything, I just sit around."

So Jesse Winchester cruises along... doing very little except making fabulous records, as his new one (again two years after its predecessor) proves convincingly. Titled 'LET THE ROUGH SIDE DRAG', it consists of eleven Winchester originals plus a Hill/Schroeder song called 'It Takes More Than A Hammer And Nails To Make A House A Home'. There's the typical mixture of beautifully controlled rock numbers, interspersed with the more characteristic ballads that Jesse is such a craftsman at writing and performing. 'Lay Down The Burden', 'Blow On, Chilly Wind', 'How About You' and 'As Soon As I Get On My Feet' are exceptionally good

songs bearing all the Winchester trademarks of unpretentiousness, earthiness, simplicity, warmth and genuine poignancy. It is definitely a superior album and one that will remain a favourite of mine for a long time. A fair number of local Montreal musicians were used on the album, including the three people who are currently in his band and accompanied him over here earlier this year: Marty Harris (bass), Chris Castle (drums) and Bobby Cohen (guitar).

"Marty and I have been together for about a year, and the other two guys came along last November. This is by far the best band that I've had, and they all have their own musical lives, so I imagine that it'll be the longest lasting. I have no intention of changing. They all write music themselves and they play with other people, so they're not gonna get bored".

I don't mind saying that I was more than a little disappointed that I didn't get to see or hear Jesse very well at Dingwalls. The place was so insufferably cramped with genuine fans and tedious posers squashed side by side that it became too much of an ordeal to try and derive any enjoyment out of the proceedings. I fought my way to a temporary position from where I saw him perform one and a half numbers which sounded well up to scratch and then I was forced to beat a hasty retreat to the bar, bruised and bewildered. Never mind though, the ice is broken so to speak, and I'm sure he'll be back for future visits now that he knows there's a following for him over here. Once he starts seeing his name crop up in a few Zigzag polls he'll be over here like a shot!

And that really is basically the Jesse Winchester story to date. Apart from the draft-dodging episode, his career has been decidedly unspectacular - devoid of the serious business hassles, personality clashes, debauched lifestyles and

other eccentricities that seem to characterise the world of contemporary music. The most important and rewarding side of Jesse Winchester's make-up is his ability to write songs of the calibre of 'Yankee Lady', 'The Brand New Tennessee Waltz' and 'Biloxi' - songs that have been admired and covered by people like Tim Hardin and Brewer & Shipley ('Yankee Lady'); The Everly Brothers and Joan Baez ('The Brand New Tennessee Waltz'); and Tom Rush and Ian Matthews ('Biloxi'). Also, none other than Wilson Pickett recorded a Jesse Winchester song called 'Isn't That So', and a country singer called Stoney Edwards has apparently adopted Jesse as one of his writers.

True, his enforced exile from his own country has given him a perspective on America that few writers possess and even now it still gives him an identity that adds fuel to his cult figure status. As from 1972 he became a Canadian citizen, and he now considers Canada his home.

"You become a character or something, you know, and people hang all these concepts on you. But in reality I'm not weeping over Mississippi or anything like that. I don't have any more nostalgia for my old home-town than you do for yours, it's just the same thing; you can't go back to your childhood, no-one can. Even though I'm legally constrained from going back to the United States, it really doesn't make that much difference to me, thank God. The way the Lord gives us this selective amnesia, it's really a blessing".

Andy Childs

DISCOGRAPHY:

- 2 Originals Of Jesse Winchester (First two as double) Bearsville K85507
Learn To Love It Bearsville K55506
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DID BUDDY HOLLY DIE IN VAIN? WHERE IS THE MUSIC GOING? WHO PUT THE BOMP? WHAT ARE WE HERE FOR? WHOSE ROUND IS IT?

Even before I was asked to write this column, recent events have sent questions whizzing round my head leaving me staring Hancocklike, into the dying embers (Tony Hancock, that is, not Herbie, who may spend a great deal of his life staring into dying embers, but since I have now abandoned my resolution to read the Melody Maker weekly from cover to cover, the news has not yet filtered through to me).

I can't claim to be one of those people in the business who know a lot about a specific area, but throughout my life I have had some experience of most aspects of the popular music spectrum, and while I don't see it as my role to champion specific artists, acts or even styles, I am concerned with the future of the big picture of popular music, whether it be pop, rock, folk, reggae, jazz or whatever. It was with some interest, therefore, that I listened to an album which had received criticisms claiming that it was a classic, contained a part of the musical future and was one of the great musical achievements of the age. It was a large jazz-based work composed and directed by Neil Ardley and called 'Kaleidoscope Of Rainbows'. The title should give you a clue. The previous albums in the series were 'Symphony of Amaranths' and 'The Greek Variations', so you must have guessed that we are in the area of thinking man's jazz.

Thinks: What do you think of 'The Greek Variations'?

Answer: I quite like them but they give the wife hiccups.

The same team, assisted by the Arts Council, produced not only these works, but a suite in honour of William Shakespeare called 'Willpower'. Get it?... Shakespeare... Willpower...

I was on holiday when it came out but heard radio interviews where the articulate Mr. Ardley explained the work to Jack de Manio, or some local radio chappie, and then played some innocuous twiddling on the synthesiser followed by Every Boy's Book of British Jazz Solos No. 27, which was rapidly faded out. The interviewer was suitably impressed before moving on to an equally impressive exhibition of flower arranging or some such, and I thought ho-hum.

I was thus ill-prepared for the rapturous critical acclaim (one critic placed it in importance with 'Sgt. Pepper' and 'Pet Sounds') and couldn't wait to slap it onto the office turntable. If all the others have got it right then I'm going to look pretty silly in ten years time but I'm afraid, as far as I'm concerned, my considered opinion is that it's crap. I'd like to find a redeeming feature but I can't. I know some of the people concerned and I'm sure they're sincere and skilful. So it's sincere, skilful crap.

There are various critical nods and winks about the development, or the structure, or it's being on a five note scale used in Balinese music. I neither know nor care about this, but I have spent a quarter of a century reading, looking and listening amongst the various manifestations of the contemporary arts, and all I know is that I can recognize a load of long winded pomposity when it comes at me out of a clear blue sky. In other words, I've been bored stiff by better men than you, gentlemen.

What's wrong with it then? Well, I put it on in the office, and Peel and I browsed through the adulatory paperwork that came

with it. He doesn't pretend to be clued up on the jazz end of things, so after about five minutes asked "Am I wrong, or is this a terrible bore?" He was not wrong but we ploughed on till the end. Balinese scales may be hard to master but the general effect seems pretty unexceptional. Much ado about nothing played over rhythmic patterns which couldn't swing less if they came out of a computer. When, towards the end, a soprano sax player opens a solo with that old trad blower's standby, the opening of the solo from 'High Society', it stood out like a good deed in a naughty world. Would the drummer own up about the jokiness of the whole thing and do a quick run round the kit shouting "Oolya, Oolya"?

I was playing it again the next day when Peel came in. "This piece is now becoming positively irritating", he said. We agreed that parts of the second side sounded like the music that accompanies Czechoslovakian cartoons, usually about a boy and a balloon, that they put on the telly when the cricket is rained off. Try listening to it and saying quietly "Now don't go too close to the traffic little Marak, said Boris the balloon".

All right. So I get more boring, pretentious albums coming in all the time. True. But they aren't usually hailed as one of the great musical achievements of our age and anyway this isn't meant to be a record review, it's me getting worried about the future of an aspect of the music I like.

About the same time, I toddled to Islington Town Hall where Anthony Braxton, an American reed player, and Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, two British blowers, were to give a concert of what might be called free jazz. Outside, I was hailed by critic Richard Williams, who, having no money, suggested that we went for a drink. We retired to that haven of pub rock, the Hope and Anchor, and he expressed some surprise that a man whose living was in rock, like myself, should be interested in a jazz concert. I pointed out that I tried to keep up with jazz developments, and that I was looking for reassurance after reading the critical comments on the 'Kaleidoscope' piece. He reeled dramatically and clutched the bar, his eyes rolling. I was about to order a pint of what held had, when it became obvious that this was a reaction to the mention of the album. "Right, that's exactly what's gone wrong", he said when the power of speech returned, and we both waxed strong about British jazz in general and Arts Council assisted work, like the Ardley piece, in particular.

The Braxton concert was not easy to listen to, but even I could appreciate the interplay of ideas amongst artistically aware and dedicated men. They are trying to move on from Coltrane and Coleman and probably don't even call their music jazz, but at least it sounds alive. I didn't notice any ecstatic reviews from the middle-aged, middle class, middle brow jazz critics, and I don't suppose Anthony Braxton will be asked to chat to Jack de Manio, but at least it wasn't a kaleidoscope of tombstones.

Can jazz still survive in any meaningful form? Probably not. I was talking to Jack Bruce about a year ago and said apologetically that I couldn't listen to today's jazz with the old enthusiasm, and he agreed, saying that since Mingus,

Miles and Coltrane peaked, the future was now with rock music. He offered the theory that Miles Davis now seemed lost because he wanted to be Jimi Hendrix and couldn't work it out on trumpet. I've looked to both jazz and rock to provide my alternative to museum music and to give me the sound of surprise, but if a part of the musical future is about state-aided works which can be usefully used by music teachers and liberal studies lecturers to show how rock rhythms and jazz can become real music, then this is where I get off.

I still stare into the dying embers. Those embers are getting like me. If they don't soon get a poke they're going out. But can rock survive in any meaningful form? Probably so. At least now it manages to attract people with enough intelligence to try a few new directions without losing the yobboes who gave it the energy to get off the ground in the first place. But is there life after punk rock?

What is punk rock? Now that pub rock has turned out to be any band in the London area not offered a large advance by a record company, punk rock is the new thing. It may sound like an inept version of the old thing, but as far as the London venues are concerned, it is the new thing.

I first tried to get to grips with it, and incidentally showed my devotion to duty, by leaving my telly on the night of the Czechoslovakia versus West Germany final to join the throng at the Nashville Rooms eager to see Eddie and the Hot Rods. There were, incidentally, quite a few music business people there, towering conspicuously, like Westerners in a Japanese street, over the heads of the assembled punks. Island Records had decided to launch the act and were watching the crowd nervously.

The group's aim seemed to be to recreate British beat music of the early sixties. Bits of pop, rock and R&B were hurled at us jerkily and too fast. The drummer maintained a steady off-beat, shooting ahead of the band when called upon to do anything more complicated. I pointed out to Muff Winwood that I couldn't see why it was necessary to recreate the kind of support act that we would have walked out on in the early sixties, coming back after a drink to see the main band. Muff, as usual, could see both sides of the question. Although they didn't look old enough to remember wild nights down the Goldhawk road, they seemed to associate spiritually with the early Who, and although the resemblance stopped there, the singer was uncannily like Daltrey during the announcements. There were a lot of shouts of "Wheel!" and "Alright!" between numbers and a plea to come forward to the stage - "Just throw them bleeding tables out the way!" This wildly excited the record company people who were occupying the tables, now firmly convinced that they had signed the beat of the streets and drew cheers from the punks, who stayed at the back of the room and knew it was all pretend anyway.

Peel and I subsequently discussed the phenomenon, and while differing on many points agreed that an anti-superstar movement couldn't be all bad. If the punk rockers aim to throw bricks through the windows of the rock establishment and shout that rock is meant to be a bunch of rebellious kids having a bash then I don't blame them. Particularly when yester-



Walters: "But Keith, isn't punk rock a manifestation of the younger generation's frustration at its inability to break through socio-economic barriers?"

Keith: "Where's that bottle opener got to?"

day's working class heroes make an album every two years, refuse to appear at any venue smaller than Tasmania, and are only seen by most of us in the gossip column pictures when they are being helped by starlets to enter or leave a Los Angeles disco.

Eddie and the Hot Rods are all very well but at the time of writing they have a record on the fringe of the charts and have continued the revolution on Top Of The Pops. If you really want a taste of the punk scene catch the Sex Pistols. I had a look down the 100 Club recently where they were appearing, supported by another well-thought-of group on that scene, Clash, featuring Joe Strummer, late of the 101ers. Clash turned out to have the usual free form drummer and to be just punks playing rock, but the Sex Pistols did have some sort of awful charisma. A sign of that is that you pull your own crowd. They certainly do that and I hope some of them don't have to go home on the tube. The crowd are rather like the group themselves in that they don't have a clearly defined image, but have managed to pinch bits from everywhere else until they've got a sort of patchwork style of their own. You could see bits of mod, bits of rocker, some Bowie, some Ferry with the main emphasis amongst the blokes being sleeveless t-shirts and a general tendency to look like the kind of youth you see posing with a motorbike on the front of magazines called 'Nigel' or 'Pout'. A couple of girls danced together in simulated leather drum majorette outfits, but most birds looked as if they were auditioning for the part of Maisie the barmaid in some fifties B picture.

The group were loud, abusive and anarchic. Indeed, their first number seemed to be dedicated to anarchy. The focus for attention is the singer. He looks like the kind of kid who, if you were teaching, you would find had his feet on the desk when you walked in the class and who could do devilish work if given a pair of scissors. The crowd, which was large, seemed to feel that they had fulfilled their function just by being there and, while there was little dancing, there was a certain amount of jumping on the spot.

A lady who also indulges in some jumping on the spot and who is always mentioned in punk rock analysis is Patti Smith. It beats me how she gets in there. Just because the band is all at sixes and sevens doesn't mean they're punks. And the drummer doesn't get any faster than anybody else. When I saw them at the Roundhouse he actually seemed one of the few blokes who might pull things together. Patti bounced

on stage, whooping and bouncing on a specific beat and the band smartly set off on a different one. Weeks of woodshedding must have gone into that one. After a few numbers which were clearly not the start of anything new but, if anything, the end of the pseudo-poetic art school rock syndrome, she announced a song about a dog - she actually said 'dworg', but luckily I am a master of foreign tongues. The fans shouted 'whoa' and 'whee' and I pushed to the front hoping, if not for 'Old Shep', at least for 'How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?'. She then announced that it was about a dog that she met on a New York street that had beams of black light coming from its eyes. I am not too up in the canine business but people in the audience responded knowingly with more 'whoos' and 'whees'. Miss Smith then revealed that her sympathy for the beast was aroused by a fact that we probably hadn't noticed. Namely that 'dog' spelt backwards was 'god'. The audience went WHOO and WHEE and I left hurriedly. The nearest to punk rock she comes in my book is her awful versions of 'Gloria' and 'My Generation'. Gloria and the Who should take legal advice.

Peel has an import album of various groups recorded at CBGB's in New York, apparently the home of punk rock, and, despite frightening reviews, it doesn't seem any worse than expected. If you define punk rock as kids, aware of what contemporary stars are doing and yet defiantly trying to rediscover the roots through a kind of primitive beat music then there it is. A group called Manster do a version of the Yardbirds' 'Over Under Sideways Down' which is so silly that it's rather good and must be calculated as an insult to musicianly musicians, critics, headmasters and parents everywhere. Articles naming the New York Dolls or the MC5 or Patti Smith as punk seem to be missing the point. But of course, if I've evaluated punk rock correctly then it must be a short-lived phenomenon. The Hot Rods are already notching up sales and the Sex Pistols appeared on the show that sees itself as the thinking man's 'Old Grey Whistle Test', 'So It Goes'.

My spies tell me that the Pistols were more outrageous in the studio than was discernible on the screen. Most people are petrified on the telly, freezing on their chalk marks, but I hear that these chaps were models of indiscipline. Just as anarchists should be. But does a

group turning its back on the system agree to appear on the show at all? I can remember appearing on Ready Steady Go when the Move made their debut. Everyone was shocked when they clearly were not only unimpressed by the whole thing, but Carl Wayne took off his jacket and threw it over the lens of a live camera. What a bunch of rebels we all thought. I think Carl Wayne's in cabaret today.

The snag is that the minute that the media, dominated as it is by the over-thirties, starts to notice the punks and what's worse, praise them and put them in the colour supplements, then they might as well pack up.

What's the alternative? I booked Deaf School for the programme and they did a jolly nice set of art school rock. But then again I saw Split Enz from New Zealand who shaved their heads, made up and dressed up in a kind of Marat/Sade meets Commedia del Arte manner and played a frankly rather boring amalgam of Roxy Music and pre war Berlin cabaret. Surely there can't be any future in something that's got to New Zealand? I expect something will turn up but off hand, the best music I heard this month was when Alan Price asked me round for a meal with himself and Eric Burdon and we listened to those old Joe Turner tracks that came out as singles on London round about the middle fifties. During the evening Eric said that I introduced him to drugs about thirteen or fourteen years ago by offering him a pill, telling him that it would get him really blocked. I certainly can't remember this and Pricey said it couldn't have happened as I would never have used a word like 'blocked'. Not unless I was blocked of course.

Where do we go from here? There's bound to be something. Not too blocked I hope. Anyone who reads Zigzag is really too old for punk rock anyway and I don't recommend you to go and see it. The punks don't want the benefit of your criticism and you'd find it unlistenable. It's better to read about it. The saving grace is that the punks have at least made a Frankenstein's monster out of some bits that the rock business had left for dead and it does manage to lurch about. At least there's more hope in that than moving towards respectability, an Arts Council grant and having the music taught in schools.

Little known facts about John Peel number one: during his national service he qualified as a marksman.

John Walters

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BUT I QUIT WITHIN TEN MINUTES"**

Paul Kantner and the Jefferson Starship

Like a Kantner composition, this interview was virtually plucked out of the air. I was all set to leave San Francisco but, knowing the Jefferson Starship were in town for concerts, I decided as a parting shot to try and arrange a chat with one of the crew. I duly rang Grunt Records and spoke to Cynthia Bowman. Could she ring back in ten minutes? The old brush-off routine, I thought - until ten minutes later when the phone rang. Could I be at Grunt in an hour to speak to Paul Kantner?

Grunt has one of those oddly ersatz -cum-toytown facades that are everywhere in the Bay area. Fake Grecian pillars painted black. Inside, carved wooden bannisters and thick carpeting. Half way up the stairs a stuffed grizzly greets you. Cynthia's office is drenched with Airplane/Starship/Hot Tuna memorabilia of every kind. Kantner produced a tray full of lethal looking ganja and, after a quick hello, set to work rolling enough to last the length of the interview. A hero of around ten years, he proved to be talkative and friendly, steering an expert line between the open, the guarded and the ironic. He even supplied the cassette and tape.

ZZ: The Starship has gone through quite a resurgence. How do you see your contribution?

PK: Songs. Song writing mainly. Harmonic structure. I'm the only one everyone sings harmony on. Grace and Marty are famous for singing harmonies, but they only sing them on my songs usually.

ZZ: Have you changed much?

PK: No. My ideas are essentially the same.

ZZ: What are they?

PK: Sharing. (Pause). Democracy. Apple pie! You know all the stuff we were taught at high school that didn't turn out to be true. Seems a really good thing to shoot for - not that you always attain it. But sharing essentially what you've got - be it music, food, POWER! A lot of our music is the idea of understanding. To get things done. We have a political system that purports to get things done. If that's not by understanding each other, it's by going in and arguing with one another continually, which takes a lot of time. That's what I'm talking about all the time. You know - just empathy with other people. That's how people call 'love' sometimes. Most Americans think of

'love' as 'I Love You' (delivered in a Casanova growl). It doesn't usually embrace more than an immediate girlfriend, wife and small circle of friends, whereas it can encircle everybody as far as having respect for people and giving them room to live. Space basically. Outer and inner and whatever you like. Free space.

ZZ: How do you regard politics now?

PK: I don't know what you mean by politics.

ZZ: What do you mean?

PK: Just dealing with people. Having you call up Cynthia and saying "Can I do the interview, and she might say "Yes, you can" or "Fuck you, we've had enough interviews this week". That's politics.

ZZ: Your music combines politics, dope, visuals...

PK: Visuals? In the lyrics, you mean?

ZZ: 'Blows Against The Empire' was billed as a soundtrack.

PK: Yeah, I didn't think of it as visual at the time but I guess it is actually. Subconsciously. Yeah, I usually have a visual thing when I write a song. Do listeners always have a visual?

ZZ: It depends on the song...

PK: Yeah, I guess that's true. That would be an interesting area to track down - categorising which songs have visuals and why. And some songs do suggest them.

ZZ: Like which for you?

PK: 'Satisfaction' doesn't suggest a visual. I'm not saying it's good or bad. It's just the visual. It's another element. 'Satisfaction' is a great song without suggesting a visual to me.

ZZ: Do you write a song in any particular way?

PK: Many ways. Usually just come out of the air. Scribble it down or put it on the cassette I carry round with me all the time. At the end of the tape you play it back and see if you like the stuff, whether it all fits, and then start putting things together. That's one way. Sometimes whole songs come in minutes. Other times a song will take months.

ZZ: Starship effectively began with 'Dragonfly'. Did you have any ideas as to how it would turn out?

PK: I didn't want it to be anything other than what it would become.

ZZ: Then no plans for it?

PK: Let it do what it does and go along with it. There's no need to control things. They control themselves. Sometimes if you try to exert an influence and it doesn't belong there, it makes it do something funny. As long as it rolls, you roll with it.

ZZ: Has that been the same attitude for the last ten years?

PK: That's how it was with the Airplane. We didn't plan it. It happened. We started a band and we played in a club in town. And it happened. We didn't have press agents, but we got a few breaks, I guess. There was no great "Let's get out and be a great rock'n'roll band". It was just that we wanted to play some music and make some money. But there was no way I foresaw or would have been particularly disappointed had that not happened. I haven't changed my basic outlook on life, like I said. I haven't reached maturity. Not that I want to, seeing most of the people I know who are mature. They don't have a very good time a lot of the time.

ZZ: Why is that do you think?

PK: Doing jobs they don't like. I just find them unhappy or locked into something they would rather be free of. That's why this is a good job. If you gotta have a job and you gotta eat, you can either do this or be a door-to-door salesman for vacuum cleaners. I tried that but quit within ten minutes. It wasn't vacuum cleaners - books or something. I couldn't do that. I'd go crazy. I'd jump off the Golden Gate Bridge, I think. There are no long range plans though, which may not be too substantial as a lifeplan - but it's worked so far. We've gone through phases. We've come to write songs about subjects that happen to be in our mind at the time and that's what critics or whatever call phases or changes. I mean you have to write something on an album and that's what we write about on that album. On any album. Any subject, be it politics or outer space or love songs or, you know...it's all part of the same big mess. You're just hearing this particular month at this particular time. Whatever catches our interest and I feel interested in passing on. You know, on the briefest level, if someone tells you a big joke - ha ha ha ha - you like to tell it to other people. The same thing. If you learn something that makes you go 'Oh!' or like when you first get some good Marijuana,



it's a pleasure to take it to friends and say 'Try this'. Or a fine wine. Bits of information that can be both useful and pleasurable. And music is a whole other element that is unexplainable. It's like electricity or cosmic rays...it does something to the human body. We don't know what it does or why it does it - all we know is that it's usually pleasurable in some form or other. It's positive rather than negative. We just function with it. We don't know why it moves like it does.

ZZ: Have you been especially influenced by any sci-fi authors?

PK: Any number. Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein's ideas, Asimov... I could go on for days. Clarke's 'Childhood's End' is in a song on 'Spitfire'; in fact the very words 'Childhood's End' are on a song on the album. And there's a thing of Heinlein's from a book called 'The Door And The Sun', where it's just one line relating to summertime. If you've read the book, it makes the line more than just the line itself. We wrote to him and asked him if we could use ideas of his, and he wrote back a letter and said he was amazed because everybody had been using his ideas in other books and records for years and had never bothered to ask him. It's not really illegal to use a concept, but he was pleased that we had been the first ones to ask. By the way, Arthur C. Clarke's gardener went to high school with Marty Balin. He wrote me in his letter "You might be

interested in that..." Do you remember a book called 'Wasps'?

ZZ: No.

PK: It's a book by...I think his name is Russell. John Russell or somebody Russell. It was about dropping an earthman onto another planet to become a terrorist - to upset the government there - and they made his skin purple to match. He acts like a one man army to make the planet think there's a whole nest of invaders - wasps - all around by doing the stings here and there. The book was later taken out of print and turned up on the CIA reading list for terrorists, counter-spies.

ZZ: Have you seen 'The Man Who Fell To Earth'?

PK: No. I don't have a great fascination for Bowie. The best science fiction films were Bruce Lee's...you know, the 'Dragon' films. Personally I think the whole space programme is really a necessity. It's a positive thing. It's natural evolution. It's happenign now in front of your eyes and it's going to happen. You should take care that it happens as best it could, is all I'm suggesting, and there are better ways for it to happen. Getting into politics by not having governments conflicting with one another continually. That's not a very subliminal way to deal with politics, but that's how we are political. There is no point in being political any more, because the people who are political are not the people who are running

things. It's just a long game that takes a lot of time. It takes pomp and circumstance. Little else.

ZZ: Does that make another 'Volunteers' unlikely?

PK: Sure we'd do another - why not? 'Volunteers' was written for the times; it was very apropos what was going on, which is a lot of what we do. In retrospect, we mirrored a lot of what was going on around us. Even the break-up of the Airplane came at the same time as the break-up of this country was happening!! No...the whole space programme is just in its birth. There are some factions that believe mankind is in its foetal stage and has yet to achieve anything beyond the foetal stage until it breaks out of the womb that is the atmosphere of this planet and starts growing. Which is a nice concept.

ZZ: Was that the concept behind 'Blows Against The Empire'?

PK: That was more just a fondness for a space story. And different elements. It was all promo for the space programmes. A lot of people worry about spending money here at home or needing things here at home and see the space thing as wasted effort or an effort not worthy of the money put into it because of the needs here at home. A lot of what it does goes to solve the needs we have here. Like the solar heating thing that's coming into vogue - as we're looking for alternative energy sources - it's directly from the space programme.

The whole technology was developed within the space programme to do that sort of thing.

ZZ: But advances like that take ages to filter through.

PK: Of course. A hundred years from now there's going to be ten times as many people and you haven't got enough and you're going to be in a lot of trouble. The way the politics of this planet are now it's not there. It is there but it's not being shared equally. Not that it should be shared equally.

ZZ: How then should it be shared?

PK: That's a play that has baffled mankind for like five thousand years. Mankind has not found a way to work co-operatively yet. So it's perhaps a pipedream.

ZZ: Does that mean that the band doesn't work co-operatively?

PK: Not a hundred per-cent of the time. I don't know of any two people on this planet who work together a hundred per cent of the time. A third of the time, for example, they're asleep anyway and they don't have to get on with one another.

ZZ: The Starship sleep?

PK: Yeah, but beyond that, I think being in a group of people demands that you recognise the fact that they are going to be assholes some of the time, because you are some of the time. If you're going to get along with somebody and produce something that is bigger than the conglomerative, all of you - two and two make five - you've got to be politic, if you want to call it that. Be friendly. Give space again. I'm not saying we will continue to be able to manage it for the next 45 years. We're not expecting it. What will happen will happen. The interesting thing is that I don't think we have any idea at all of what we are in the universe. We're like a little germ sitting on that rock over on that hillside, trying to understand the world and universe around us. The universe around that little germ is maybe three feet wide. I think we on earth are in the exact same position, trying to look out into the universe and understand it from this vantage point. It's exactly like that germ trying to look out and understand Los Angeles. I find it fascinating. I don't know that I expect to find out what is out there. You can't get out there far enough...yet. But little things come in every day. It's a good cartoon. I wish if there were people out there they'd get hold of us. Space, UFOs, alien intelligences. Did you know that Pete Sears is an alien intelligence according to this government?

A major interruption occurs. Grace Slick (I gulp) phones. She is furious. With no prior consultation, Sony have used her picture in connection with their product. Cynthia will take care of it. She calms down and wants to speak to daughter China. China enters, a breath-taking six year old with classic Californian tan and blond locks. She talks briefly to Mummy about the night's arrangements. Then comes over to Daddy Paul, who patiently explains to her why she can't stay in the room.

ZZ: Any plans for coming over?

PK: We're thinking about it for early

Richard Young



next year. February, March, January?

ZZ: Why haven't you been over before?

PK: There hasn't been that great a demand for us over there...frankly. They asked Marlon Brando why he had done the part of the Godfather - what drew him to the part; what great political ethos - and he said that part of it was that nobody had offered him a job for four years! But we've always been sort of underground over there and we've never been Top of the Charts, or whatever you call it. We wouldn't go over there like Elton John or that sort of thing. We don't play those kind of venues anyway. We'd probably play some large and some small. We wouldn't play hardly any large, though. Maybe Hyde Park if we could get it. We may do a festival if one turned up and it looked like it would be good. But our natural inclination is away from that now.

ZZ: Why?

PK: We don't sound good. We're too complicated. We put too many notes in. Not that it's good bad or worse. But I mean, somebody like Peter Frampton or Mick Jagger can communicate with the audience, simply by locking into the back beat. With us, we've got eight keyboards, five voices and two guitars going all the time, bass and drums, and it's hard to get that into a set of speakers and out to 48 million people sitting on the grass. They don't make those kind of speakers. We were going to play a whole series of festivals in the US, and were even contracted to do them, but we cancelled them. We didn't want to do them.

ZZ: What's happening with Grunt?

PK: That's just serving for us and Hot Tuna.

ZZ: No new bands?

PK: We found ourselves incapable of the task to be frank. We just didn't have the time to do it ourselves like it should be done, and didn't have the people around us that we could trust to do it. We tried to do it ourselves and fucked up. Nothing really serious. And also at the same time, RCA was having a whole great to-do with...let me see, how can I explain without getting sued...an imbalanced person running the company - out of tune with the times. RCA was, like, going down the red line, off the wall, down the sofa and into the floor. Yeah, they finally got rid of him. It was at the same time that Grunt was happening and it got lost in the whole mess.

ZZ: So there was little or no co-operation from RCA?

PK: No, not at that time. Total non-co-operation. That was the problem. He - the imbalanced person - eventually got sent off to Bangkok to publish Reader's Digest or something. And they've had a real good guy in there for the last three, four, five years. He's brought the company back together again. It's selling records at least again!!! The other guy - we had a song called 'The Bastard Son Of Jesus' - and the President - if you can imagine this - spent at least eighty hours on the phone with me talking about it. Trying to persuade us not to have it because it would offend somebody. But, I mean, the right or wrong of it aside, if you can imagine the President of a record company spending eighty hours talking about something like that. Just insanely at times!

There followed more interruptions which ultimately brought the session to a halt. Sadly.

Ian Birch

Swarbrick

...A major presence on the English Folk scene, both electric & acoustic and one of it's most dominant personalities - Dave, with help from his mates, has made his debut solo album. Out now.



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"SWARBRICK" Dave Swarbrick (TRA 337)

lewis furey

Once upon a time, maybe a couple of years ago, while reading 'Rolling Stone', I came upon a review on album by a certain Lewis Furey, which was noted in fairly glowing terms. Anxious, like all good Zigzaggers, not to miss something which was touted as both new and interesting, I tried to acquire a copy of this album, but basically failed miserably. Whereupon I forgot about Lewis Furey.

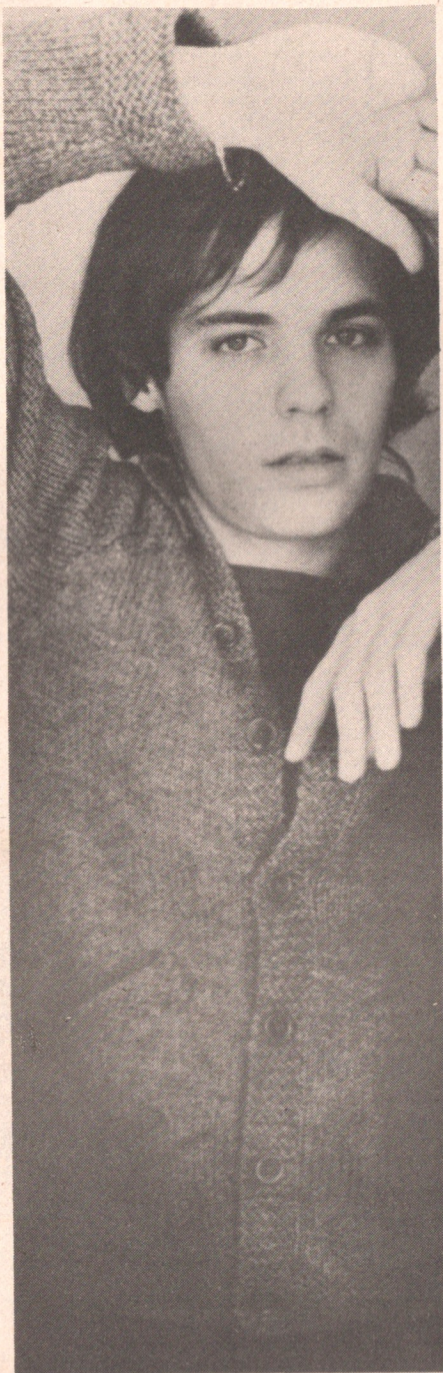
Much more recently, while negotiating to interview the Don Harrison Band (Gasp! Tobler as the Henry Kissing of rock'n' roll, already!), it came to my notice that the company who manages that band also include Lewis Furey among the clients. Having heard nothing of the man for some time, I was surprised to learn that he is very much a going concern, and that he was actually just about to have another album released, this one, happily, in Britain as well as America. At which point I decided to write about him.

The results of such a dynamic decision could easily have been calamitous - I could have let myself in for writing about a solo album by a Japanese flute player, or a rock opera played by a man with a couple of hundred synthesizers on the subject of athlete's foot. Fortunately I lucked out. Instead of these I got a raving lunatic - not him, me. Lewis Furey is not bounded by normal criteria. Although inevitably I haven't heard every record that has ever been made, even if I own them, I'd be willing to wager that you'll have never heard anything like this. The nearest comparisons are with the great eccentrics of our time - Wild Man Fischer, Tom Waits, Ivor Cutler, Beefheart. I don't have the slightest idea what Lewis's songs are all about, but I'm fascinated by them in that moth to a flame way which is totally inexplicable, and I have to say that if you're looking for something extraordinary, if not extraterrestrial, then you should check out Lewis Furey.

Just before we start, here's an example of the kind of problem which occurs with Lewis Furey. With my advertising manager's hat on, I called up A&M, his record company, having decided to write this article, and enquired whether they'd be interested in investing in a page of the magazine. I was told that they quite honestly weren't sure where to advertise him, but that they'd taken a small space in 'Gay News', a journal which is normally purchased, or so I'm told, by a minority audience. Quite honestly, such an ad would be as appropriate in 'Nosepicker's Weekly' - to which I am a regular contributor - because it's impossible to have an audience ready for this artist. The only adjective that I can see which describes him adequately, albeit with extraordinary vagueness, is weird. And it's not weird as in bestial, or from outer space, or daft enough to read my articles this far. It might be every kind of weirdness you've ever come across, or it might be completely new in a bizarre way for which words have not yet been invented.

Furey's songs follow few words. Most of the time they rhyme, like that did, but they don't seem to relate - try this snippet from 'Caught You' off 'Lewis Furey', the first album. "Did you find any traces from my past, the guns bark, the geese take flight, a starving man loses his appetite, my lips and my ass are shut tight". What? And from 'The Humours Of Lewis Furey', in a song called 'Casting For Love', there is this. "Let me hear you say jazz, send it out on the wire - want more elixir, want to play with fire. Madame Chose can you get me some. Little Miss Thing I'm on a hot run!" Are you as confused as I am?

Lewis Furey is from Montreal, and was born in the summer of 1949. At the age of 15, he got a scholarship to Juilliard, where he learnt to play viola. Even before that, when only eleven years old, he had performed a violin solo with the Montreal



lewis furey

Symphony Orchestra. Perhaps we should let the man himself take up the story (via one of the oddest American press releases I've ever read). "Took a train to Vancouver, practised viola so I could earn money as a pop music session player, and began writing verse which I published in underground magazines, that spring I travelled to Tokyo, Berlin and finally London, appearing in obscure pornographic movies, picking up accents, lifestyles, and movie stars, going to gym, and working in sleazy french restaurants".

Neat, eh? You see, what we have here, I think, is perhaps another Van Dyke Parks. Not that he's similar specifically to the great VDP, but Furey seems just as convinced that his values are correct, even if the rest of us aren't actually on the same planet for a lot of the time. The lack of capital letters is a furey speciality...

The first album wasn't released here.

probably because no-one from A&M could understand what it was all about. I know exactly how they feel - without trying to describe the record in any detail (I can't!) it contains several songs which sound like they might be mutations on a Kurt Weill theme musically - there's a tango, a manic banjo solo, Cat Stevens (who has the same manager as Furey) and Tim Curry (of 'The Rocky Horror Show' I think) as 'English firefly thugs' (like Arthur Mullard playing Nureyev), a Lou Reed vocal impersonation, and a lot of other unlikely things besides. Then I read Lewis's own description of the songs on the album. Here's a couple of extracts: "the waltz! is viennese in style, the action is set in the surreal psychic landscape of unrequited love. It is a waltz of delirium and a horror song". Then "closing the door! is a country song in form done in a style unrelated to country music, when opting for the piano, handbell and trombone orchestration, the producers were reminded of an answer salva dor dali gave a student who asked why the watches on his famous painting were limp. 'limp or hard', the master replied, 'that is not important, the important thing is that they kept the right time!'. the restraint illustrated by John Lissauer's hold on the string orchestra until the last measures is what one can at some very few moments feel in the thick of a difficult affair..."

You just have to hear it, although quite seriously, it's not for those of a nervous disposition, and after hearing it, you might have considerable doubts about being left alone in a room with Lewis. Indeed, a curio.

The new album, which has just been released here, is musically less stark, or perhaps it wouldn't have been put out here at all. Whereas the first album's backing was basically down to drums, bass and a banjo/mandolin player, the second has Lewis singing at the piano accompanied by guitar, bass and drums, and sounding much more like a rock singer. Of course, that only lasts until you read the words he's singing, because if anything, they're even further removed from normality than those on the first album. Again, there's no point in my trying to explain them - perhaps the nearest one could get to a comparison is with Rupert Holmes, although lyrically, Holmes writes comparative nursery rhymes. Once or twice, if you're not listening carefully, it almost sounds normal!

There's something very strange about the whole of the second album - maybe it's a latent sexuality of a deviationist type, although there's only one taboo 'fuck' only said once. The running together of the tracks seems to make the record a little like the soundtrack to some berserk film, but if that's right, I don't want to see it, because I'm far too confused with just words and music. I'd start eating boot polish if I had to see a film of this mayhem.

One of the oddest things about the second album is that it was made in London (or London), produced by Roy Thomas Baker, and with English back-up people. I wonder what they thought about it?

And I wonder what I've written about it - it's like trying to describe green to someone who's colour blind. After you've spent a few minutes doing your best, the person in front of you will say "Yes, but how heavy is green?", and your palm strikes your forehead, as you realise you may as well talk to a carpet on that particular subject. Have I been read by carpets? Have I been read by anybody? Was it worth all this trouble just for one lousy advert? I don't know - how heavy are you? But still, should you chance upon either of the Lewis Furey albums in your friendly local abattoir, don't hesitate... you must either buy them or destroy them.

John Tobler



THE STRANGLERS

Among the hordes of bands currently playing London's pub and club circuit, the Stranglers are leading contenders to break out and hit unsuspecting mass audiences and the big time.

In a year of solid gigging in the smoke they've built a fanatical following with their rancid brand of manic rock. At the time of writing the plum support spot on the Patti Smith tour and their first provincial voyages are set for the near future, so Strangler mania might well be enveloping the country by the time you read this. That would be one of the best things that could happen right now. The Stranglers' untamed originality is a force 9 gale of bad breath which could knock the already battered music scene into a cocked hat. Along with other high intensity bands like the Hot Rods, the Clash and the Rockets, and American counterparts like the Flamin' Groovies, they could prod the sleepy rock scene into throwing off its Melody Maker bedspread to wake up fresh and revitalised.

The first time I saw the Stranglers they were supporting Patti Smith at the Roundhouse on the Sunday. I'd seen their name in various gig guides, but such was my pub-rock conditioning that I was not expecting much more than another competent boogie outfit - and therefore missed half their set. I should have known better with a name like the Stranglers. The minute I entered the old engine shed I was aware that something far different and 100 times more exciting was going

down.

There were these two depraved looking geezers hacking dementedly at their guitars, while a bearded character with plaited pony tail coolly produced unbelievable soaring melodies from a battered Hammond. Holding this avalanche of lunatic genius together was a thickset drummer who behaved more like he was hammering the roof on a garden shed - occasionally standing up for added force. They built to an awesome climax, then stopped suddenly.

A short gap. The guitarist announces a number called 'Down In The Sewer', and they career into a song about making it with rats.

I was absolutely stunned. It's always nice when you're pleasantly surprised by a band you had no preconceived ideas about; but there was something far stronger - and stranger - about these Stranglers. It was like some sinister force was possessing these four degenerates, ripping music beyond the capabilities of mere mortals from their convulsed forms.

Such is their originality the poor old Stranglers come in for a double dose of the old comparisons when unfortunate writers like myself try and convey their unique sound on paper. Most frequently drawn-up similarities are with the Doors, Velvet Underground, Seeds and 60s psychedelic bands. I'll go along with that, so will the Strangs as these bands have definitely been past influences on the group. It's inevitable

an organist who combines mysterious with melody will get compared to Manzanek, although Dave Greenfield insists he never heard much Doors before becoming a Strangler. The unrelenting viciousness of the beat to some of the numbers, as well as the unsavoury lyrics and subject matter probably evoke the Velvets comparisons. But with these basic similarities, comparisons and categorisation must end. The Stranglers sound like no one as much as the Stranglers (the only non-original number in the set is Burt Bacharach's 'Walk On By').

My second exposure to the Stranglers occurred at the Flamin' Groovies/Ramones Bicentennial hop, again at the Roundhouse. This time they surpassed the previous gig and also got a rousing reception!

That clinched it. I had to know more about this lot, so I scurried down to the Nashville to catch one of their Thursday night spots and talk to the band.

We covered a lot of things, most of which are unprintable, but first of all here's their line-up: Hugh Cornwell (guitar, vocals); Jean Jacques Burnel (bass); Dave Greenfield (organ); Jett Black (drums).

The Stranglers are based in an unlikely place called Chiddingfold, near Guilford, Surrey, which means they do a lot of commuting to gigs. Guilford, far from encouraging the band's endeavours, has turned against them. "They resent us", says Jett

Black, "Basically they just can't handle the fact that we're playing in London all the time. There's a lot of semi-pro bands down there who think they're the greatest. We don't even play there". (You should live in Aylesbury mate!)

Before the Stranglers all four played in groups they won't name "on the grounds it may incriminate us!"

Hugh Cornwell tells the story of the formation of the Stranglers like a dirty joke: "It happened by accident. There was this band that came from Sweden, who shall be nameless. They were a four piece which included two American deserters, one Swedish national and an English deserter (no prizes for guessing which one Hugh is). We came across to Britain to do pub gigs but blew them out because they (the gigs) weren't any good.

"Well, the drummer got draft-dodging blues and split back to Sweden, then this amazing piece of flesh here (pointing to Jett Black) said 'Come down to Guilford and rehearse, and we'll get it really good'. So the band moved down to Guilford - the Swedish national, the American deserter and me - and started rehearsing with Jett. It was taking months getting it together and they didn't realise the amount of time it takes to get started. They suddenly realised maybe they should be getting into better things and split, leaving me and Jett with a place to live and a rehearsal room".

Hugh met old college buddy John Burnel in Guilford, and their mutual interest in music persuaded him to move in and start rehearsing at Jett's. (This was about two years ago).

Jett takes over: "We got another guitarist and worked with him for a few months, but it wasn't really working the way we wanted it to. We wanted to get into the sort of music we're doing now but this was not possible in the early days because we had to do the sort of stuff you have to do to survive. This other guy really wasn't into that trip at all and left. We decided we wanted a keyboards man, hunted round and found Dave (who was auditioned after answering an MM ad). He was just right for the band".

So it was about August 1975 that the Stranglers were born. Jett: "To cut a long story short, here we are! We've been working in London for just over a year and we've come from obscurity to semi-obscurity".

(The group went through loads of prospective names, but the Guilford Stranglers, which they called themselves for a joke, seemed to stick (or grip!) and eventually got shortened to Stranglers).

When the group came to London they punted tapes around the agencies and record companies, and were eventually signed by Dai 'Abolical' Davies of Albion. As Jett points out "Dai was intelligent enough to see that we were immensely talented". Dai's got them some prestigious gigs and apparently there are now several record companies sniffing around. Recently a cassette including a dynamic version of stage fave 'Go Buddy Go' was circulated round the music business. Naturally the Stranglers want to get some of their stuff on vinyl as soon as possible.

Now a word about the music. What are the Stranglers trying to do? Jett: "Well, we wanted to do our kind of music, which is a bit off-beat when

one looks at current trends. We didn't want to follow everybody else and we have stuck to that. In the early days the criticism was pretty horrendous! Now people realise we are refreshingly different and that's what we wanna stick to".

Sorry to dredge it up, lads, but what about these influences? After multiple groans from the group, Jett cites alcohol as a prime influence, but once politely corrected adds: "We're not really aware of influences, but people say we're influenced by the Doors and Velvets. We don't know. We listen to all sorts of music".

Hugh: "John and I were at college for three years between 1968 and '72. You know when you're at college you get introduced to a lot of new sounds. We got influenced by what we heard in that period. All that time we were absorbing things and not really knowing how they were going to come out. I dunno if you've noticed, but absolutely fuck all's happened since about 1970 when Hendrix died. A couple of bands split up and a few people died, but really nothing's happened. Everything's been like a throwover from those times. It's all coming out a bit later".

Over the last year the band has steadily built up its large following with explosive sets including such classic tunes as the afore-mentioned 'Go Buddy Go', 'Bitching', 'Down In The Sewer', 'Peasant In The Big Shitty', 'Schoolmam', 'Tomorrow As The Hereafter' and 'Mean To Me'. They've hung onto 'Walk On By' from the old days 'cos it's evolved into something astoundingly different from Burt's original.

All the band writes the music and the lyrics are written by 'Whoever's got the most to grouse about at the time. These are based on experience but a few are fantasised".

At the moment the group's song-writing is prolific, but an intense gig schedule means they don't get much time to work up the new stuff.

The Stranglers openly admit that "strange things outside of the music" help shape the strong, often disturbing songs. They won't be drawn into revealing these "strange things" though. When pressed in best 'News Of The World' shock probe fashion an offended Hugh exclaimed "But that's our private lives! It's got nothing to do with the general public". Your intrepid Zigzag reporter could only gauge that these mysterious things affected the music "enormously" (perhaps they're all rat fetishists!). 'Schoolmam' is about a head mistress who masturbates herself to death in the classroom! (Hugh and John were schoolteachers for a little while). Good wholesome stuff from the Stranglers then! John insists: "We're clean wholesome boys. We're just like the boys next door... if you happen to live next door to a morgue!"

The Stranglers find the London audiences a great environment to develop in. Dave: "London's fantastic to work. There's a real concentrated awareness which hits us. You get really nice audiences who understand the music".

The group are wary of straying outside the smoke. As John explains: "Everywhere we play outside London we go down like a fart in a church because they're expecting old-fashioned music. It seems you've got to wear huge stiletto heels and play heavy lead

guitar all the time. I can't understand it. People seem to need some sort of starting point to identify or compare a band. They don't know where to categorise us. What we are doing with the Stranglers is different for this country at least. If we are, as a lot of people are saying, psyched-elically orientated, we don't deny it. It's just a new departure for this country. We're taking over where other bands left off years ago... and we're opening the flood-gates for other groups too".

Yes, Stranglers imitators are already springing up. Weeks after the band hit London a band rang a place they'd been playing, pleading "Book us, we sound like the Stranglers!" "They booked them, and they were terrible", adds Dave.

The Stranglers say they have a great history of violence at gigs. ".... We've even been attacked onstage!" says Hugh. I recalled a rock press gossip column entry which mentioned a slight altercation between the Stranglers and the Ramones at Dingwalls. At the word 'Ramones' the group sprang into animated disgust. "They should stick to playing tennis", said Hugh. "Huh?" said I. "Well, they can't play music", he replied, "They have never seen a motorbike in their lives. They're Manhattan Island kids trying to be Bronx kids. We blew them off stage at the Roundhouse".

What about this "slight altercation" then? "Tummy trouble", said Hugh. Again... Huh? John explained that he honked over a Ramone and boover was momentarily in the air. "But the Ramones split like hairs at the first sign of a fight. They thought they were going to get mugged!"

One gig that sticks in the Stranglers' brains is their first ever, which was at the Purley Over 18 Club's annual dance with the Rockets, a sizzling R & B outfit who you'll be hearing more of.

Hugh: "375 people walked out on us at that gig. They all turned up in ultra-smart evening dress and as soon as we started they began drifting out. By the time we'd finished there were about three people left!"

"Right in the middle of a number a guy came up and grabbed me. I thought he was going to get heavy, but he just launched into a very intellectual rap about why we weren't working with the audience, the ethnic quality of the music and blurrgh! (Hugh makes vivid verbal excretion noises). We just told him to piss off and kicked him off the stage".

John adds: "Mind you, they just weren't our type of audience, and we did happen to be out of our heads 'cos we'd had a four hour wait to go onstage. We went on and said 'You're not going to like us so you may as well piss off!' As the set went on it sank in and they started going out in droves, panicking at the exits!" (John's a man who's been known to break three bass strings at the same time! While I'm in these brackets, why did Hugh lob an aubergine into the crowd at that Nashville gig? Let me out of these brackets!)

Kris "I'm a Mad Buck! Needs

(Footnote: Apart from the expense, one of the main drags about being forced to use Union typesetters is the fact that half of the bastards can't spell. For 'Guilford' please read 'Guildford' throughout).



MORE ON THE MOTOR CITY MADMAN TED NUGENT

Last month we left the Amboy Dukes continuing their journey away from the centre of the public mind. Their first album for Polydor 'Marriage On The Rocks', although containing many fine moments, had not been terribly successful, and the group's tradition of internal unrest was being continued. Polydor saddled the album with one of those terrible post-pschedelic 'Rebel Rebel' advertising campaign claiming "You can't bring them home to mother"; and not long after its release in early 1970 another personnel shake-up disrupted the group's schedules:

"Greg Arama and Dave Palmer both left at around the same time. Greg was deep into drugs which nauseated me, and Dave wound up pursuing an engineering career. Dave and I parted very close friends... he'd just become tired of life on the road".

Replacements were found in the shapes of Rob Roesger and K.J. Knight, who had previously drummed with Jack Burningtree, one of Detroit's many local legends. With this four piece - Nugent, Roesger, Knight and keyboard player Andy Solomon - a live album was recorded, and released by Polydor in January 1971. 'SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST' was recorded at the Eastown Theatre in Detroit, and is a blend of old stuff like 'Prodigal Son' and 'Dr. Slingshot' - the latter being the title track of a Mainstream album, presumably released after the group's departure, about which I know nothing (Oh the shame!) - and new stuff.

"I think that 'Survival Of The Fittest' had the best songs I've ever done. There's a great song called 'Poppa's Will', which is the best song I've ever written... I want to do it again some time as soon as we get the recording rights back.

"Andy Solomon did most of the vocals on the album, and that's why they sound so bad. He just didn't have a rock'n'roll voice. He could sing up a storm - hit

every note right on - and he had a great feel for music, but he just didn't have the right voice".

To compound Ted's headaches, Polydor were proving little better as a record company than Mainstream, so Ted - still incredibly only 21 years old - upped and lit out on his own.

"I had been let down again so badly by Polydor and by the management that I was really irked, I was just violently angry. I just kept playing and playing with different bands. I had to get rid of Andy Solomon because he just didn't have any spunk left. He was really upset too, because he'd been with me since 'Journey To The Centre Of The Mind', but he couldn't keep it up. We stayed as a four piece at first, then we had a lead singer called John Angelos come in. There was also Joe Vitale who played drums with me for about six months to a year. He was a great drummer but he couldn't stand the pace. We were on the road constantly".

Constantly indeed. The Dukes were playing well over two hundred nights a year at this time, and Ted reckons that the fervour he currently displays on stage is minimal to the levels it reached before the non-stop gigging started to take its toll.

"I've been doing it for seventeen years. If anybody looks at my calendars they'll see it was just one long slog from '69 onwards. The real pity of my career, if you can even comprehend it, is that I don't even have a fifth of the enthusiasm I had when I started off. I've still got ten times more than most people, but if you could have seen me six years ago... I didn't have a wife, I didn't have a child, I didn't have hunting, I didn't have anything... I've never been paid for a record until this year.

"I was on the road every day. I lived in the car, lived in chicks' houses, lived

in hotels - rock'n'roll, rock'n'roll... all the time. If only someone could have harnessed my energy then the way I've learnt to do it in the past few years, a real honest manager who could have said 'Hey, don't do this gig, it's not going to do you any good, it's not your kind of audience'. But I was like a maniac then, nauseating people just because of my flamboyance. I still do that now, but I don't even approach the heights of audacity that I used to".

How do you mean, Ted?

"Everything about me. Even now when I do interviews and these fools go 'Humph, well what about this hunting lark...', and contradict my style, I do get a little prickly. But in those days I'd take the tape recorder and smash it, and say 'What the fuck are you talking about?'. If a guy said I was no good, or did a review which said the show was no good, I'd take the day off and go to his office to threaten the guy. I'd jump on a plane to wherever his office was, and I'd bust in on the guy yelling and throwing stuff off his desk, and I'd say 'You prick... you write this fuckin' stuff... did you see that audience, you asshole?'. These guys would be backed up against the wall screaming for people to come and carry me out! I was really threatening, because if the guy lied it really annoyed me.

"I can take goofy things. Max Bell wrote some things, descriptions of me, that were just off-the-wall pure fun. It was obviously a cosmetic approach to the article that was enhancing it. But when they tell lies:

'Ted Nugent killed two guys'; 'Ted Nugent eats raw meat and insists that his band does'; 'Ted Nugent rapes nuns'... I get real mad! If Lester Bangs (the author of the 'killings' rumour) ever stands in front of me, that guy is going to be irreparably wounded... I'll smack his teeth! The guy is a liar!"

In the three years from 1971-73 when Ted was charging non-stop round the South and Midwest, leaving a trail of broken and exhausted drummers, vocalists and bassists in his wake, he built up a fearsome reputation as a live performer (as well as a hunter of journalists!). But unaided by financial support and hype from his record company - for the simple reason that he didn't have one! - the only publicity to reach the world at large in all that time was when he started indulging in 'Guitar battles' with other axe-wielders rash enough to tread the same stage:

"I only did that for a year, not even that. I only did it with a couple of guys - Mike Pinera, who was with the New Cactus Band at the time and is just a terrific guitarist; and Frank Merino from Mahogany Rush, who is not a terrific guitarist. I also did a couple with Wayne Kramer and Kramer's Kreemers - a bunch of saps.

"They weren't really battles, they were just jam sessions. The idea of battling with Frank Merino and Wayne Kramer is pretty insipid - those guys can't play. They were promoted in a competitive spirit though, so that people would be inspired to come to the concerts, because we needed all the help we could get to maintain our popularity. We never went any further uphill during those years, but we never went downhill either, because we've always turned on an audience live".

To keep the punters interested in him, Ted also took to making extravagant claims about his instrumental pre-eminence to anybody who cared to listen, and devised various on-stage antics involving Indian outfits, bows and arrows, and shattering glasses. In their context, such gimmickry was doubtless both entertaining and sound business sense, but unfortunately - even though he hasn't done any of that stuff for quite a while now - many people still think of him as an opportunist braggard, rather than the fine guitarist that he undoubtedly is.

By late 1973, Ted had produced a considerable backlog of new material and he was feeling ready to chance it with a record company again. He found himself a producer in Lew Futterman - who surprisingly was more used to working in the jazz field - and Futterman in turn arranged a deal with Frank Zappa and Herb Cohen's Discreet label. An odd choice, as the Discreet operation is very Los Angeles based, and Nugent meant next to nothing that far west.

The Nugent group at this stage had been worn down to three men - Nugent himself, bassist Rob Grange who, almost unbelievably, has kept up with the Nugent pace since late '71, and drummer Vic Mastrianni, a more recent addition.

"I was doing the singing, which was a shame, because I really can't sing that well. I stopped using keyboards too, because I never really cared for them. In fact I don't like 'em at all now. It's a rare song of mine that calls for keyboards".

With a little help from various friends on vocals and occasional keyboards, this trio made two albums for Discreet - 'CALL OF THE WILD' (K59203 - April '74) and 'TOOTH FANG & CLAW' (K59205 - Feb. '75) - and although the production is a bit woolly and the vocals are below par at times (though by no means so bad as Ted reckons), I honestly think that they're my favourite Nugent albums. (By the way, all five albums mentioned thus far are deleted in this country, but are available on import. You can procure them from the excellent Bizarre Records should you so desire).

"All the years I didn't have any records out at all, I realised that the mainstay - the real thing - was live. So everything I do now is basically geared to live. I'm not saying that I won't compose something specially for recording, but basically the real feel for all my music is the live thing. I always knew that, it was just a matter of getting my teeth into it and plying solder. My main goal now in music is to drive myself up a wall! I really like to hammer".

If that sounds appallingly moronic, I can assure you that it's not. Heavy and

direct it certainly is - the years between the Polydor and the Discreet contracts had honed down the tendencies to fussiness and over-arrangement - but it's also often surprisingly tasteful and delicate. The subject matter for the songs is also very straightforward, reflecting Ted's obsessions of hunting, self-assertion and loud, loud music.

"I don't think lyrics are critical to the point of being pre-planned, but once they have been written I would stick by them. What I write is something I believe in, or something I've experienced, something that I do, something that I like or some truth of mine. What I always do is write the music - nice licks, nice rhythms - and then I've got a whole load of titles that I like. (At this point Ted produces an old exercise book and reels off a list of about thirty prospective pegs on which to hang a tune. Prepare yourselves for 'Death By Misadventure', 'Two Eyes For An Eye' or 'Beaver Eaters'!). What I do when I think of something I like is write it down, then I write different songs in the dressing room, and I'll go through my list here and say 'Hey, that sounds like 'Jailbait', or something'. You know, 'Jailbait' would have to be a kind of ballsy, bouncing song - so I could write lyrics about young chicks".

On the Discreet albums, titles like 'Below the Belt' and 'No Holds Barred' reflect Ted's uncompromising attitude to matters affecting his personal freedom, and 'Livin' In The Woods' and 'Call Of The Wild' announce that he had found a fascination to rival that of music:

"I actually started hunting when I was just a kid, because I lived in a section of Detroit that had a river flowing through it, and I used to hunt a lot. But then I rock'n' rolled from '66 through about '70 without ever hunting. Then suddenly I realised that I had money, and that I could afford to go out and buy a bow and arrows, and take a week off and go out into the damned woods. And the first time I did I went 'Whewee! Hallelujah!!!. I mean it felt so good, it couldn't be expressed in words. When I got back I took a grand out of the bank and went and bought a canteen, a rifle belt, shotgun, bow and arrow, all this camping gear... just threw it in a Rent-a-car and headed off back to the woods. Spent a week in a tent... it felt so good, I can tell ya..."

Ted's predatory instincts form a sizeable part of his public image these days, especially his love of 'wait-till-you-see-the-whites-of-his-eyes' confrontations with 400lb grizzlies, but in fact much of his hunting is less dramatic and more functional than that.

"I use almost everything I shoot. There are times when I'll shoot a fox or a crow, because they're pests, and I won't eat them. But I haven't bought any meat at the stores since '71 when I first started hunting again. I've caught everything we eat - bear and deer, pheasant, partridge, quail, duck, geese, raccoons, woodchucks, everything..."

"I'm not against hunting for its own sake, because I can see that it's definitely a real buzz. But I am against the guys who just come and flop around the woods in a drunken uproar, and they don't take any pride in their marksmanship, and just wound the animals. If they're in the woods I'd just as soon shoot those assholes... I mean, that's low. But I think hunting's a real honest recreation".

That would probably be a good description of the music on the Discreet albums too. Presumably because of Ted's vocal weaknesses much of the music is instrumental - in fact several tracks, like 'Free Flight', 'Rot Gut' and the classic 'Hibernation' are completely instrumental - and for the most part it's structurally uncomplicated, with the bass and drums creating an inexorable, rolling groundswell of rhythm over which Nugent displays fire, flair and feedback in abundance. The second side of each album, however, provides a little variety from the sonic assault and battery, particularly 'Sasha' on 'Tooth Fang & Claw' which is a delightful three minutes of acoustic ballad, showing a side of Nugent's talent that is

rarely glimpsed - sad to say.

"I think that's a specialty song. It's obviously written about my little girl, in fact it was written the night when she was born. It's a very meaningful, a very emotional, romantic song for me. I have no desire to do that sort of stuff live, but on record... who knows? There's another baby coming next month, so maybe I'll write another song about that".

Although by now happily married and living on an 80 acre rural estate south-west of Detroit where he spends most of his time away from touring, Ted was still well dissatisfied with his business arrangements.

"Unfortunately Discreet didn't know how to promote an album any more than the others. I agree those albums weren't exactly the cat's ass... they weren't the greatest albums in the world... but I felt they weren't giving us any support, so I asked for a release from Discreet, and they let us go without any screaming. We moved to Epic and they're doing it right".

Along with the move to Epic came a shift in management to the New York company of Leber/Krebbs, who were just starting to do quite well with a bunch of guys called Aerosmith. It's proved to be the turning point of Ted Nugent's career, giving him a behind-the-scenes organization that he's happy and confident about, and providing the fuel injection to lift him to the level of a major international attraction. The Discreet albums both sold in the region of 100,000 copies in the States... 'TED NUGENT' (EPC 81196) the first album after changing companies and dropping the 'Amboy Dukes' tag went gold with sales of over 500,000. From being a regional hero in America's heartland, Nugent's fame has spread from coast to coast, and his tour of the Continent and Britain this summer went so well - due more, I think, to his flair for attracting advance publicity than the punters' familiarity with his music - and reaction was so favourable that he'll be back in Europe next spring for a more extended campaign.

Before the 'Ted Nugent' album was recorded a further reshuffle of personnel had taken place. The line-up had expanded back to four with the recruitment of Derek St. Holmes, a rhythm guitarist and vocalist from a Detroit band called Scott, and an unexpected figure had taken over on the drum stool.

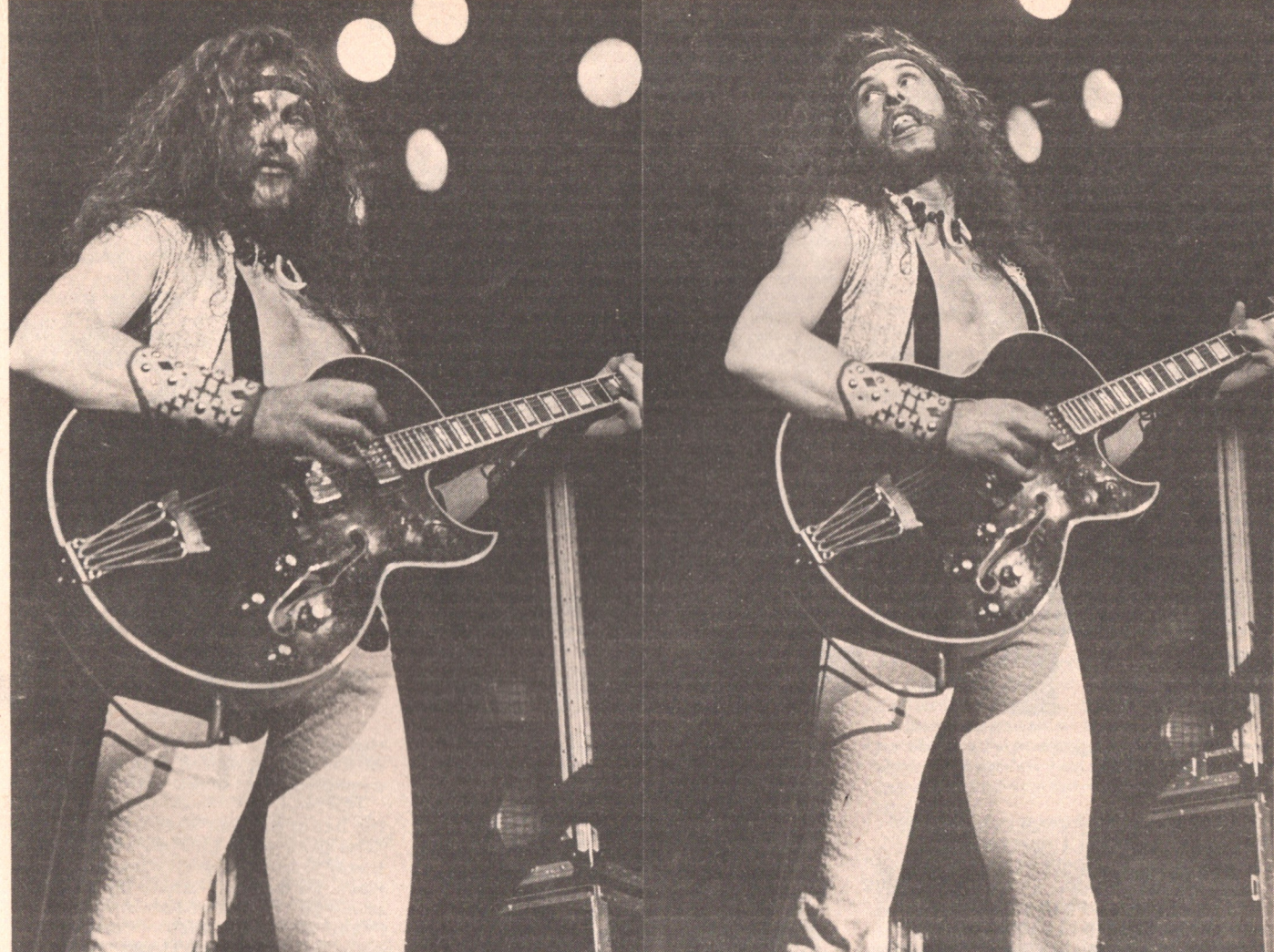
"I wanted somebody that could sing good, and I'd seen Derek in his band in Detroit years previous, and he really knocked me out. Great vocals... great guitar. Vic Mastrianni left because he wasn't playing the sort of drums that I felt my music needed - again it's this constant search for the right team. I got a drummer called Brian Stafford, who had also been in Scott, and he really played great - he was a real thunderer live - but when it was time to record, Brian wasn't a precise enough drummer to do an album.

"We had done a tour previously with If, and I'd seen Cliff Davies and I'd been overwhelmed. He was just so totally efficient, totally together, so solid... like Charlie Watts with more power!"

With the extra guitar as a permanent fixture, the sound on 'Ted Nugent' is more heavy metal as opposed to hard rock, more overtly riff-based, and almost brutally relentless. Seduction be damned... this is rape!

Opening the strike with a monstrous home run is 'Stranglehold', an eight minute epic comprising two thick slices of heavy metal wrapped round an extremely tasty, mellow filling. Following hard on its heels is 'Stormtroopin', a deliciously unsuited little ditty, delivering a warning of potential threats to our liberty (I think). An amazing start, and when I first heard the album I thought after listening to those first two numbers that it was shaping up as the greatest heavy record ever made. Unfortunately a clutch of mediocre songs like 'Hey Baby' (St. Holmes' contribution), 'Motor City Madhouse' and 'Queen Of The Forest' bring the overall rating down substantially, but it's still an album to have, if only for 'Stranglehold'.

"I've got dozens of songs that I haven't



used, and the thing is that some of the ones that aren't used are better than the ones that are. How that comes to be is that I get a lot of arguments from people. We had arguments on that album with people who thought 'Stranglehold' was no good - it's a classic song! When I wrote 'Journey To The Centre Of The Mind' you should have seen how they wanted me to change those chord patterns. I let 'em all talk, and then I say 'OK, let's do it'... everybody can go and fuck themselves if they don't like it, because we are going to do this goddamn thing! They didn't want to do 'Hammerdown'. I got a lot of complaints, so I played bass and all the guitars, and I was going to sing it too, until they realised that it was going to be on the album whether they liked it or not. Because it's a great song. Fuck 'em... I know... I'm the authority on rock'n'roll, not them".

The problem is that, by his own admission, Ted's critical faculties are suspended when his material is under the microscope, so it's essential that he has good advisors, not sycophantic yes-men (which it's very easy to be, despite yourself, when you're under the spell of the man's presence) or tasteless dodos.

"I've got to surround myself with people who are into the music, because I won't instill enough quality. I hear a song of mine and I'll get really excited, even if it's not that good; so I've got to have somebody who can feel this desire of mine to record the songs, but has got the ear for it and can say 'Hey, you can do better than that'... because I'll get excited just hearing the stuff on a shitty little cassette recorder".

This aspect, however, was obviously not entirely straightened out when 'FREE FOR ALL' (EPC 81397) was recorded earlier this year. Like its predecessor, it contains some great stuff and a smattering of what is basically dross - in terms of raw material if not performance. 'Dog Eat Dog' is a cannibal of a number, and 'Tomorrow' boasts some excellent melodic

soloing, but 'I Love You So I Told You A Lie' is hardly a memorable closer, and Ted's written far better songs than 'Turn It Up'. Overall, though, it's a pretty damn good record, and the production is easily the best Nugent's ever received - loud and clear, with the guitar cutting through like an aural laser beam.

"We spent much too much time recording really, again because of people arguing and people not caring for the material. So next time you just watch young Ted... I'm going to go into the studio for one month, and I'm going to record it straight through. If somebody doesn't want to sing, I'll sing; somebody doesn't want to play bass; somebody doesn't want to produce... fuck 'em, send 'em off for a sandwich and I'll produce! I'm sick and tired of people telling me 'This song's no good'... they're fuckin' great songs. (Adopts pusillanimous whine) I don't wanna do 'Stranglehold', it's nothing special!... fuck them!... that song made that album.

"On 'Free For All' we needed someone else to sing, because Derek didn't feel like it at the time. He was going through some changes, so instead of putting up with the changes, I just got another singer. I got an old friend of mine called Meatloaf, who is a great singer. I wouldn't take him on the road though, because although he would pull his weight - he certainly would... he's way over 250 lbs. - I need another guitarist, and I don't want a singer as well. I'd just as soon sing myself. I'd go back to a three piece before I'd get just a stand-up singer".

For a man who's been working for the past seventeen years, and gigging well over 200 nights per annum for ten of those years, Ted Nugent is still quite startlingly enthusiastic about his music and the communication thereof. In fact, when he got to talking about his next album, which will include such delicacies as 'Wang Dang Sweet Poon Tang' (!?) and 'Cat Scratch Fever' (previewed at Hammersmith by Ted on his own when the bass

amp packed up briefly), Nugent was literally out of his seat with excitement, almost scattering the breakfast table as he gave me impromptu scat renditions of the forthcoming attractions - and the damn thing hasn't even begun to be recorded yet! But in the long term Ted forsee a reversal of the priority given to his two lifestyles.

"I imagine I'll be rock'n'rollin' for maybe ten more years. There'll be a very obvious decline in the amount of time I spend playing rock. There'll be a gradual changeover of lifestyles so that within ten years I'll be living in the wilderness in Canada or maybe Alaska. It's a search for self-sufficiency, real independence. I'll just come out twice a year to do a tour. I start for Alaska next September to spend a month there checking it out... as a basic introduction to the area. Then I'm going to Africa in '78 on a hunting safari to the Sudan - if it's cool there - and Botswana".

Like I said last month at the start of this interminable monster, Ted Nugent is very definitely a man who knows what he wants and how to get it. In the process of doing so, however, he seems to have built up a kind of Bill Grahamesque love/hate image. So how does he see himself?

"I'm hard to work with if you don't like what I do. But if you do like what I do, I'm the easiest guy in the world to work with, because I do like to work, and I do like to get these songs accomplished... if that's what you want, then I'm your man, I'm the greatest in the world; but if you don't care for what I do, then I'll be the biggest pain in the world, because I'm gonna do what I want to do... and like the words of 'Stranglehold' say 'If a house gets in my way, I'm gonna burn it down'... if anything gets in my way, I'll just blow it over. I want to do certain things, and you can bet your scrotum I'll do 'em".

Thanks for the tip, Ted, I'll nip out to my bookie immediately.

Paul Kendall



R · E · V · I · E · W · S

'Chicken Skin Music'
RY COODER
Reprise K 54083

I've been looking forward to this one for ages, same as I do every Ry Cooder album. Apart from the obvious quality of his music, there's something about his total detachment from the very formalised and generally uninspiring rock'n'roll circus that I find very appealing. But that's only a small part of it... Ry Cooder is an artist in the true sense of the word - a man who makes his craft a fine art. And as such his actions aren't governed by commercial considerations. He operates very much on the outskirts and often at the frontiers of popular music, rediscovering forgotten musical traditions and re-working lost songs, always adding to them, stamping them with his own distinct style, yet retaining their historical essence.

Cooder's current preoccupations on this, his fifth album, are with Hawaiian and 'Tex-Mex' music, two styles that have continued to service their respective cultures faithfully despite the homogenizing efforts of Hollywood and Nashville.

Cooder's quest for genuine Hawaiian music led him to discover legendary slack-key and steel guitarist Gabby Pahinui, and his respect and admiration for him is clearly apparent in a review of 'The Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band' album that Cooder wrote for the August '76 edition of *Crawdaddy* magazine. In this splendidly informative piece Cooder talks of his introduction to Pahinui ('I had an invitation to come out to Gabby's house at Waimanolo to eat stew, play guitar and relax'), and provides a brief history of Hawaiian music with scathing references to its bastardization in the 1950s when 'it had gotten to be an overripe, pablumatic mutation that agreed with mainland tourists who were used to Lawrence Welk, Hugo Winterhalter and Pat Boone singing 'Tutti Frutti'. This is the synthetic Hawaiian music all the world knows and loves: the cloying, reverb-invested crescendoes of steel guitars

(played badly), plunky ukeleles and greasy sounding Hollywood baritones in white pants singing 'Hawaiian Wedding Song' in English, night after night in all the lounges of Waikiki, Las Vegas, Miami and Palm Springs. The folks in Waimanolo call it 'The Waikiki Sound'.

He goes on to explain the origins of the slack-key guitar and how Gabby Pahinui and his friends are keeping alive the tradition of true Hawaiian music; and he also describes the sessions which produced the album (released by the local Panini label) on which he himself played. Cooder's scholarly interest in such matters is infectious enough, but the music he is talking about also happens to be quite brilliant. Warner Bros. Records is at the moment negotiating a distribution deal for the 'Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band' album, but meanwhile you can help yourself to a taste of what to expect by listening to the two tracks on 'Chicken Skin Music' that were recorded in Hawaii - 'Yellow Roses' and 'Chloe' - featuring Gabby on steel guitar and another legendary Hawaiian musician Atta Isaacs in acoustic and slack-key guitar. Both these cuts are very relaxed and peaceful and the standard of musicianship is of course peerless.

Cooder has also incorporated a piece of Hawaiian music into what I consider to be the best track on the album, 'Always Lift Him Up'. Written by West Virginia fiddler and songwriter Blind Alfred Reed, who also wrote another favourite Cooder track of mine, 'How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live!'. This song is a genuinely moving ballad with a gospel feel to it, and the beautifully lush instrumental section is, as Ry explains in his sleeve notes, an old Hawaiian gospel song 'Kaua Wai Wai' that he learned from Gabby and Atta. That, however, is as much of Cooder's Hawaiian material that we are allowed to hear for now although I feel sure that we're bound to be treated to more on some future album. Incidentally, the title 'Chicken Skin

Music' comes from 'chicken skin' which is a Hawaiian expression for something that gives them goose bumps.

Norteno, or 'Tex-Mex' music forms the basis for four tracks on the album, 'The Bourgeois Blues', 'Goodnight Irene' (both Leadbelly songs), 'He'll Have To Go' and 'Stand By Me', three of which feature accordion player Flaco Jimenez - another master musician in that particular style. Besides the accordion, the other prominent instrument in 'Tex-Mex' music is a thing called the bajo-sexto, which is played on all of the above four tracks to great rhythmic effect. 'Stand By Me' is performed in gospel style - a form of music that Cooder returns to consistently, 'She'll Have To Go' has a bolero rhythm, and 'Goodnight Irene' is recorded in waltz time... so much contrast and yet each song is characterized by the rich accordion-based instrumentation, Cooder's slightly dry vocals, and subtle, complex arrangements.

Of the other two tracks, 'I Got Mine' is 'an old pop song from the minstrel and medicine show tradition', and 'Smack Dab In The Middle' is another piece of gospel, this time inspired by the Golden Gate Quartet and the Pilgrim Travellers who apparently specialised in 'complex arrangements and hair's breadth syncopated arrangements'. Just to add typically conclusive weight to the validity of his interpretation of this latter song, Cooder uses vocalists Jimmy Adams and Cliff Givens who both have careers reaching back into the heyday of this style.

And that's only a scratching-at-the-surface description of this album in order to persuade you to investigate for yourselves. There's so much music here, so much fascinating and enlightening music. How many so-called artists can really claim to make albums that are truly both educational and so immensely enjoyable? 'Time' magazine once said that Ry Cooder makes America come together in its music... well, now he's stretching his musical horizons to other shores, and the results, even though

he's probably just begun, are just as cohesive... a pure joy - a work of art even.

Andy Childs

'Texas Cookin''
GUY CLARK
RCA APL1-1944 (Import)

By now you must all be sick and tired of being told how 'Old No. 1', Guy Clark's long-time-com-in' debut, is one of the very best albums of this or any other year. I make no apologies, however, for reiterating the message and urging you to pick up on it. But do it fast, because on the evidence of what I'm listening to now, 'Old No. 1' is the complete consummation of Guy Clark's talent. 'Texas Cookin'' is a depressingly vapid non-event by comparison.

Guy waited a long time, developing his songwriting and his reputation in Texas and LA, before venturing to Nashville to get his first album onto vinyl, and the dalliance was amply justified by the end result. A series of atmospheric, acutely-observed vignettes, delivered in Clark's nicotine-tinged voice, redolent of seedy bar rooms, dusty backroads and deserted railway halts... it's great. And the backing by a bunch of Guy's buddies and Nashville's finest is immaculate.

Ostensibly there should be no problem with 'Texas Cookin''. It was recorded in almost identical circumstances with the same producer and more or less the same musicians, and they perform perfectly adequately. The big let-down is in the material. Half the songs were written before 'Old No. 1' was recorded, and if you think that means they can't be as good as the songs that were chosen for the first album, you'd be damn right.

Almost every track on 'Old No. 1' is immensely visual. The lyrics, the voice and the arrangements all combine to conjure up very real pictures of the people and places Guy Clark has known. Every number tells a story, so to speak.

The only number on 'Texas Cookin'' which even remotely does that is the final track 'The Last Gunfighter Ballad'. It's the poignant story of an old ex-fastdraw merchant, and basically it's no more than a rehash of the magnificent 'Let Him Roll' or 'Desperados Waiting For The Train', but after 35 minutes of largely uninspired and uninspiring music it sounds like a positive gem.

Of the other tracks, 'Black Haired Boy' is appealingly plaintive, but pales alongside 'She Ain't Goin' Nowhere' from the first album; 'Virginia's Real' (sic) is 'Nickel For The Fiddler' revisited, with some good fiddle from Johnny Gimble, and nothing to make it more than very lightweight; and 'It's About Time' is reminiscent, very reminiscent, of 'Old Time Feeling', but - like the rest of 'Texas Cookin'' - it's so terribly one-dimensional.

The lyrics on 'Old No. 1' were rich in imagery that opened up great vistas of fantasy and emotion beyond the immediate subject matter of the song. The songs on 'Texas Cookin'' aren't merely not rich in those sort of associations... they're completely devoid of them!

The abiding impression of the album is that contractual pressures forced Guy Clark into the studio to make a second album long before he was ready, so that he had to use a clutch



of old second-rate songs and new ones that aren't really up to scratch. Yet in a telephone conversation with Mac a few months back, Guy said he was quite happy with the way the album had gone... I can only assume that he, like many other artists, is too close to his own ability to be able to evaluate it properly.

Of the more recent songs, the title track is a good-timey thing extolling the virtues of that ol' Austin cuisine; 'Broken Hearted People' is one of the album's higher spots with some fine harmonies from Emmylou Harris, and 'Good To Love You Lady' spends over five minutes saying absolutely nothing and building to a coda that sounds like 'Cinderella Rockafella'!

'Once upon a good time we got together and made a record of ourselves having a good time making a record - this is it', say the sleeve-notes. Which is fair enough. I'm a great aficionado of a good time, but I'm an even greater aficionado of a good record... which this ain't. If disappointment is relative to expectations, then this is probably the biggest one of the year. Give me some old western movie any time.

Paul Kendall

'Mark Twang'
JOHN HARTFORD
(Flying Fish through Sonet)

Multiple cause for celebration - the return of the amazing John Hartford, and the start of the long overdue British outlet for Flying Fish. Both events have been well worth the wait - I believe there's a heap more of the Fish catalogue emerging soon, and 'Mark Twang', while not altogether a flawless record, is worth a good deal of investigation. It's totally solo, with Hartford playing fiddle on four tracks, banjo on three, guitar on one, singing acapella on one, and delivering a fairly unfunny monologue on the last. The monologue is actually the proverbial sore thumb, because most of Hartford's humour is well observed and very funny, but on the 'Lowest Pair', an unnecessary parody of the Lord's

Prayer, he blows it. Considerably funnier, and far more intelligent, is 'Don't Leave Your Records In The Sun', a self explanatory title, but with hilarious impersonations of the results of failing to obey that advice. The first one to check whether he's bought a duff pressing will appreciate the joke.

Even that's not really what the record's all about. The general theme, which pervades about half the tracks, is concerned with riverboats, the setting for most of Hartford's recent work. Seems he just goes up and down the big rivers of the south and mid-west, playing his battery of instruments to entertain the travellers. It's not as simple for us to appreciate - we're unlikely to catch, say, Sandy Denny doing an acoustic set on the Tower Pier to Kew Bridge trip (with its close look at Battersea Power Station) although it would certainly improve the trip. Of the boat songs included, 'Let Him Go On Mama' is exquisite, right up there with Guy C. and Jerry Jeff W., in my humble opinion. At least a couple of others are less accessible to me because fiddle is the backing instrument used, and perhaps my major wish concerning the record is that Hartford would concentrate rather more on the guitar/banjo side of things instead of the fiddle, which he obviously prefers at this point in time, but which has difficulty in keeping me involved for the whole length of a song.

On to some more good ones - there's a tongue twisting recited catalogue of several dozen bluegrass heroes, titled 'Tater Tate and Allen Mundy' (sic), which is highly ingenious; a ludicrous carve-up of 'Little Cabin Home On The Hill', sung as though a somewhat malfunctioning voice box were being used, and another future classic called 'Tryin' To Do Something To Get Your Attention', which concludes with a section which the artist accurately describes as 'Duelling Faces'.

Of the rest, the only track that really doesn't work for me was 'Austin Minor Sympathy', a considerably over extended fiddle piece, which didn't really work in the live version at Dingwall's either. The remaining two tracks are neither offensive nor classic to my ears, but the really good tracks make this record well worth investigation. John's allowance of time at the Wembley Country Festival was an insulting fifteen minutes, so it's extremely pleasant to see him really back with a bang, stamping on his amplified board for rhythm, furiously picking at his instruments and singing some excellent songs. It's just as good to see the Flying Fish label with an English outlet - there's lots more great stuff coming, and editor permitting, I'll be delighted to tell you about it as and when. So try and hear this one - I suspect you'll find it a worthy addition to your wants list, and I very much doubt whether you have anything like it in your collection.

John Tobler

'Long May You Run'
STILLS/YOUNG BAND
Reprise K54081

If the music on this album had in any way matched up to the exceptionally heavy vibes surrounding its making then we would surely have had a record of unparalleled gravity. As it

is, Messrs. Crosby and Nash can rest safe in the knowledge that their absence from 'Long May You Run' will do no harm at all to their fragile careers. This re-pairing of two of rock's most enigmatic figures is, especially from Stills' point of view, a considerable failure. His waning talents as a songwriter has long been a cause for consternation and speculation, and none of his four contributions here suggest that he may have rediscovered the spark of creativity that served him so well in the past. Old Steve is definitely on the way down; in stark contrast to Neil Young whose own musical achievements are poised to reach yet new heights of introspective genius.

Interestingly, there are two common theories as to why Young decided to become involved in this project. The first, less cynical theory, is that he's always really been the best of mates with Stills, has always enjoyed playing with him, and made this album more out of respect for the past than any regard for current status. The other, more likely, theory is that Stills' ailing condition had become clearly apparent even to a biased recluse like Young who, at the peak of critical acclaim, stepped in to try and bolster his old buddy's reputation. I personally subscribe to the latter idea, and it could have worked well, if only the album sounded like a combined effort instead of the schizophrenic effort it's turned out to be. Their individual styles of composition and execution are so different, and in Stills' case so rigid, it seems a more unlikely combination the more I think about it...like the Trower/Cooder Band maybe??

Neil Young's five compositions are, not surprisingly from my own personal viewpoint, the real meat of this album, and are well up to his current standards. 'Long May You Run' - the title track and the single; 'Midnight On The Bay' - a gorgeous lilting ballad that he previewed in his concerts here last March; and 'Fontainebleau' are all superb; while 'Ocean Girl' and 'Let It Shine' are both good songs, partially spoilt by unsuitable and shoddy performances respectively.

'Ocean Girl' in particular cries out for a Crazy Horse backing instead of the over-rhythmic, glossy and insubstantial treatment afforded by Stills and his band, consisting of by the way Joe Vitale (drums), Joe Lala (percussion), Jerry Aiello (Keyboards) and George Perry (bass). Even 'Fontainebleau' which sounds remarkable in its present truncated form, could have easily worked out as an extended classic in the 'Cortez the Killer'/'Down By The River' mould if only Young had had a Sampedro to trade licks with and Ralph Molina and Billy Talbot to provide the rhythm. To be fair though, 'Midnight On The Bay' with its ethereal arrangement and delightful harmonies, works perfectly, and likewise the title track.

Steve Stills' songs on the other hand are pretty weak and don't really merit lengthy discussion...they're lyrically bereft of any sense or cohesion and melodically awkward and confusing. Even his singing bears the mark of a man who knows he can't cut it any more. '12/8 Blues' is about the only song I find memorable at all and that's because I'm sure I've heard the riff somewhere before.

It's a shame really, isn't it? Two

of the most famous artists in rock history, one on the way up to an as yet unsighted peak of creativity and the other sliding down to the barren depths of endless mediocrity...they meet on the way, let everybody know what the position is, and continue on their own paths. Stills' next album will be a miserable bummer and Young's - now supposedly titled 'Chrome Dreams' and containing the masterful 'Hurricane' and 'Country Home' - will doubtless be amazing.

Andy 'Out of the City' and down to the Tithe Farm' Childs



'THE MODERN LOVERS' Home Of The Hits BZ 0050

'JONATHAN RICHMAN & THE MODERN LOVERS' Beserkeley BZ 0048

There's something like five years between the recording of these two albums, so it comes as little surprise that they're almost totally different in style - even though they've been released simultaneously, give or take a month or so.

On 'The Modern Lovers', composed of 1971 demos plus some slightly later recordings, a manic Velvet Underground influence is strongly evident throughout, whilst Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers' is a weird mixture of primitive sounding skeletal rock'n'loony tunes, cut this summer. Nevertheless, every track on both albums bears the distinctive Richman stamp.

'The Modern Lovers' is the sound of a band turned loose in the studio for the first time - charged with new-born energy, and getting years of pent-up ideas and influences out into the open...and they must all have been bonkers on the Velvets, 'cos the album, especially the first side, reeks of their early period. John Cale's presence as producer of six tracks (on 16 track too) could have had something to do with this as well: Cale 'discovered' the Modern Lovers in Boston, and during his stint behind the Warner Brothers A&R desk in Burbank, cut these demos in preparation for an album to follow.

All I can say is had that album been released during late 71/early 72 it

might not have been Bowie who gave the scene its badly needed kick in the arse. (It should have been the Flamin Groovies, but that's another story). The Lovers/WB relationship failed to blossom, and it was 1975 before Richman (minus his group) was heard for the first time with four tracks on the 'Beserkeley Chartbusters' album, put out here by United Artists. These include 'Roadrunner', which was also released as a single - the best of last year, I think.

The prototype 'Roadrunner' appears as first track on 'The Modern Lovers'. It's a much different machine than the later model, which was stripped down and smoother running. This one powers along like a speeded-up 'Sister Ray', with Richman thrashing out that riff on his Stratocaster.

After this auspicious entry, the band turn to early Doors as their launching pad for 'Astral Plane', an organ dominated swinger, which I gather is a love song. Richman's lyrics, which have reached a high stage of development on the new album, are still budding here, but are delightfully strange. 'Pablo Picasso', later recorded by Cale himself, is a good illustration... Richman is extolling the skills of the Spaniard in pulling chicks, and skilfully rhymes 'Picasso' with 'arsehole' several times. This track could almost be the Velvets using the rhythm out of 'The Gift', and Richman cutting loose with a guitar solo which cops a run straight out of 'European Son'. (Jonathan's talent as a guitarist is given full rein on this album; his solos are like nobody except Reed or Morrison, and his rhythm playing is always full and driving. Sadly his guitar playing is all but absent on the newer album).

I nearly forgot 'Old World' - another mysterious offering...and that's side one; four magnificent tracks - and please don't get me wrong about the Velvet Underground influence. Jonathan Richman may sound like Lou Reed with a head cold, but his - shall we say - offbeat personality is still sprayed all over the album, just as the Modern Lovers can already be heard to be evolving their own sound. Pity they didn't get the chance. The line-up is Richman (vocals/guitar), Ernie Brooks (bass), Jerry Harrison (piano/organ) and David Robinson (drums)...and Robinson is the only Lover to make it to the recent album. He's fantastic; effortlessly driving and holding the band together.

Side two is not as consistent, containing three tracks plus Cale's remaining two. Two are slowies, including the strange 'Hospital', which was donated to the album by Jerry Harrison. It's a meandering, desolate love song to a girl in hospital (!), and includes the classic line: 'I go to the baker's all day long - there's lots of sweetness in my life'. The other slowie is 'Girl Friend', which has the early 60s innocence which dominates Jonathan's later love songs.

The side kicks off with 'She Cracked' a ferocious rocker with a crazy beat of the same manic calibre as 'I'm Waiting For The Man'. This is a Cale track (surprise, surprise), and so is 'Someone I Care About', another monstrous rocker which brings to mind the amazing Stranglers. 'Modern World' closes the album on medium overdrive - it later mutated itself into part of the 1975 'Roadrunner'.

There it is: a true blast from the

past, and only a demo. Maximum marks to the Home of the Hits label for its timely appearance.

After splitting with the original Lovers (wonder what happened to Ernie and Jerry), Jonathan seems to have mellowed out, swapped his Velvets records for late 50s/early 60s teen rockers, and swamped himself with comics, television, and all things American...and it was at this stage, 1973, that his name began to get around. The very first mention (that I saw) came from the fastest name-dropper in the West, the legendary Kim Fowley, who claimed to have "lived in the Modern Lovers' house in Boston" in the sleeve notes of his very listenable 'International Heroes' album...and he told Mac, who was hanging around with him at the time, that he should watch out for the Lovers who were "just amazing...a cross between the Velvets and the Beach Boys". Fowley, his long nose probing anything which might show a return ("from either the aesthetic or the Jewish viewpoint", as he says), was in fact on the Richman case months before Cale.

In November 1973, Frame (who already knew Richman from the late sixties, when they both wrote for Vibrations magazine) and Tobler had lunch with Richman and his managers, Eddie Tickner and Jim Dickson, at the Hamburger Hamlet on Sunset Strip. This was smack in the middle of the dreaded vinyl crisis, and the Modern Lovers had just been dropped by Warners after completing a \$50,000 album, which presumably lies in the can even now.

In the three years since then, Richman has written some highly individual songs, which appear on 'Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers' - an album which seems set to establish him as a household name (if you live in the right household).

First hearing was certainly a shock after the dark, loony intensity of the first album. Here was a bunch of silly lyrics over threadbare, nearly acoustic rock. I mean, Richman's even tackled 'Amazing Grace', just him and his gee-tar. From the man who wrote 'She Cracked'?! Well, all this was not half as dismal as I first thought. The lad's matured, shaken off his influences to allow Jonathan Richman to emerge fully.

'Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers' is a fun album about America. The lyrics and often the way JR sings them, have me a giggling heap (Ed: Not a pretty sight). Sure the backings are sparse and skeletal, but every pluck of the bass and twang of the guitar counts, and David Robinson is there more than ever on drums. It doesn't need anything more. The two new members of Jonathan's group are Leroy Radcliffe on guitar and Curly Keranen on bass.

Leroy is a fine rock'n'roll picker of the old school. His solos and sound are right out of '57. Try the version of 'Back In The USA', a song right in line with Richman's preoccupations with American life. The rockout solo is a killer.

'Abominable Snowman In The Market' could be a horror movie, but on this album is some thing much friendlier. Although the housewives are not impressed - and complain to the management. Jonathan thinks the snowman is "a real nice guy". In

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'Here Come The Martian Martians', the ever-friendly Jonathan is musing over what flavour ice cream the landing aliens - "riding their Martian bikes" - will like.

"Hey There Little Insect" sees our hero hoping various crawlies (including a praying mantis) will refrain from landing on him! These three, which run consecutively on side two, are all set to classic rock structures encompassing such as Bo Diddley and Elvis.

Like all the tracks, they sound live in the studio - you can tell when Richman walks away from the mike. Richman's voice has gained a lot of character and expression, as have his words, since the first album. He still sounds like he's got a nasty cold though. 'New England' is Jonathan saying 'Home's best', like so: (spoken intro) "Now I've been all around the world but I love New England best, I might be prejudiced but I love New England best". The song is just great, and the words are killing ("I've been to Israel's arid plain; it's magnificent, but so's Maine"). 'Rockin Shopping Centre' (!) cele-

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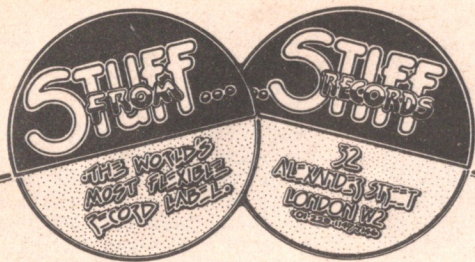
My dear Miss James...how can we ever apologise. Please accept some more kisses on the bottom. xxxxxxxxx

brates more of Richman's American fantasies. After the immortal words "If I were a shopping centre I'd sure be embarrassed. I know I'd never get a date with some cute little building like from Paris!" the tune rocks out with Richman's only real display of guitar prowess. And then he sticks to rhythm, in a scraping Reed style. Leroy takes the honours with his solo.

'Lonely Financial Zone' concludes side one - it's a weird, desolate look at a city (I think). Side two has three not-so-hoties with the rather weak 'Hi Dear', an acoustic ode to 'Springtime' and 'Amazing Grace'. These last two, being merely pleasant, send an otherwise great album out on a relative low note. Still, a minor grievance in view of the wealth of goodies on the rest of the album.

It would be a real crack to see this album released here and turn Jonathan Richman into a superstar. That would be a lot of fun - and fun is what we need! Fun, fun, fun! (And more fun!)

Kris "I've been to Paris and I've been to Rome, but Aylesbury will always be my home" Needs



OCT 76

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LAST MONTH	THIS MONTH	ALBUM TRACK (or single *)	ARTISTE	NUMBER	Months on the Chart
3	1	So It Goes	NICK LOWE	Stiff BUY 1 *	3
15	2	Clang Of The Yankee Reaper	VAN DYKE PARKS	Warner Bros. K56161	8
14	3	Roxette	DR. FEELGOOD	United Artists UAS 29990	2
5	4	Can I Make It Last	BOZ SCAGGS	CBS 64248	17
1	5	Desperados Under The Eaves	WARREN ZEVON	Asylum K53039	5
7	6	Shake Some Action	FLAMIN' GROOVIES	Sire 9103 251	6
-	7	Rhiannon	FLEETWOOD MAC	Reprise K54043	5
2	8	Memory Motel	ROLLING STONES	Rolling Stones COC 59106	6
-	9	Lily, Rosemary & the Jack of Hearts	BOB DYLAN	Worlds TAKR 2982	1
4	10	Topanga	JOHN PHILLIPS	Dunhill DS 50077	78
16	11	Someone To Lay Down Beside Me	LINDA RONSTADT	Asylum K53045	3
19	12	Only Sixteen	DR. HOOK	Capitol E-ST 11397	11
25	13	Theme From An Imaginary Western	JACK BRUCE	RSO 2659 024	37
-	14	These Days	JACKSON BROWNE	Asylum SYL 9013	34
8	15	Murder Man	JOHN OTWAY & SILLY WILLY	Track 2094 111 *	34
-	16	Little Does She Know	KURSAAL FLYERS	CBS 81622	1
6	17	Cypress Avenue	VAN MORRISON	Warner Bros. K46024	91
-	18	New York's A Lonely Town	DAVE EDMUNDS	Swansong SSK 19409 *	1
13	19	L.A. Freeway	GUY CLARK	RCA APL1 1303	7
-	20	You Never Wanted Me Babe	FAIRPORT CONVENTION	Nondescript	1
-	21	Special Love Song	DELBERT MCCLINTON	ABC ABCD 959	1
9	22	I'm Losing You	DWIGHT TWILLEY BAND	Shelter ISA 5102	4
-	23	I Don't Want To Talk About It	GEOFF MULDAUR	Reprise MS 2255	1
-	24	Aloha Louie	MICHELLE PHILLIPS	A&M AMS 7250	1
-	25	Hyperdrive	JEFFERSON STARSHIP	Grunt BFL1 0717	8
18	26	Past, Present & Future	SHANGRI LAS	Phillips 6336 215	129
-	27	Midnight Bus	JESSE WINCHESTER	Bearsville K85507	1
11	28	Transient Friends	GENEVIEVE WAITE	Paramour PR 5088 SD	18
20	29	Rebecca	FLO & EDDIE	Columbia PC 33554	11
-	30	Yellow Roses	RY COODER	Reprise K54083	1

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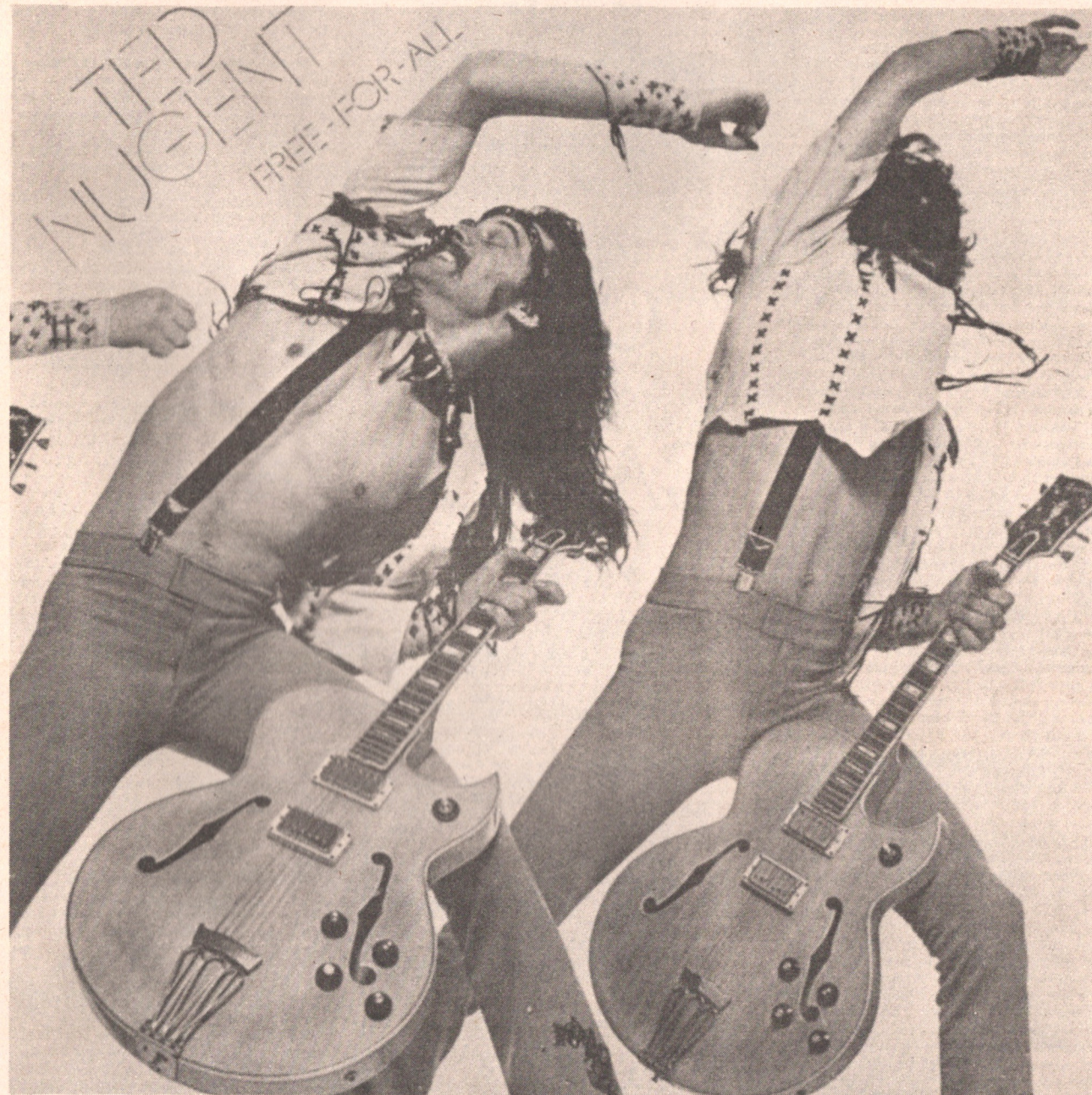
El Paso City
Rose Of Cimarron
Last Gunfighter Ballad
Dog Eat Dog
If I Don't Have You
Spoon River

MARTY ROBBINS
POCO
GUY CLARK
TED NUGENT
ORLEANS
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Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.

That, however, is not terribly relevant, so let's move straight on to this month's poll results, which you'll see over there. Of all the categories we've had so far, this one seemed to stimulate the most interesting and thoughtful response, much of it very entertaining. In fact I hooted with laughter at some of the more scurrilous and libellous views you expressed. What a superb body of readers the old mag has! Oh, do keep those letters rolling in... I love 'em, I love 'em.

Out in front, by miles and miles, was the dear old BBC: a resounding thumbs down to the bird-brained Radio One and all its lowest-common-denominator, brain-deadening hogwashery. The vitriolic abuse some of you heaped on their most moronic disc-jockeys was an absolute crease, and has been passed over to John Walters for incorporation into his next Keith Moon satire series.

Before leaving Radio One to rot in its pit of infantile ordure, let me hastily point out that your condemnation of the Station Of The Nation uniformly singled out John Peel as the one redeeming feature. John was roundly praised by all.

I must say that I was deeply saddened and positively staggered to see Melody Maker up at number two; a crushing vote of no confidence in that erstwhile sparklingly entertaining and informative journal. I wonder if this could have any connection with the fact it doesn't seem to brag about its circulation these days, whereas in bygone times it used to blow its own trumpet as loudly, frequently and tastelessly as John Otway talking about his sexual triumphs. Your advice to IPC would appear to be: send this poor old bewildered beast to the knackers yard and spare it any more suffering... but I've got a feeling the MM is about to undergo a terrific resurgence. Some of the guys on the staff are really decent chaps, and if only they were allowed to give their enthusiasm a little more leeway, we'd see a reversion to the classy writing and pioneering spirit of the old days. Of course, all the dead wood will have to be pruned out first - but where there's a will there's a way. I mean, look how NME was transformed from the boring ill-written hypesheet it was in the sixties, into the essential organ it is now. All it needs is a man with the magic wand.

Enough of this pessimism: let's live for today, as the Grass Roots used to advise. I saw Poco at Oxford Poly last night, and they were great. So were Graham Parker and the Rumour, and Steve Hillage, who I also saw recently. Some ace albums around too, and next month being the end of the year, I understand that I'll have the opportunity to list my favourites of 1976 - a rather strange ritual which all music publication editors seem to find a necessary year-end exercise. (I hear rumours that we might be getting a new editor soon. I just hope he doesn't scissor my works like the current butcher).

Just in case anyone is remotely interested, the two albums I've been playing most during the past month are both what might loosely be termed 'unauthorised' recordings. Generally I disapprove of bootlegs - not because they deprive artists and record companies of a piss in the ocean of the rightful income, but because they usually sound so shitty and are packaged so shoddily, considering their cost. In terms of packaging, these two don't even rate, but the quality of content and sound are both superb: One is a Dylan bootleg double containing rejected versions of songs from 'Blood On The Tracks' - his finest album of the seventies, in my view. Most interesting, the changes he wrought for the final versions. I guess this would be available down at your local bootleg dealer, but please don't write asking for any specific addresses, because I don't know any.

On the other hand, you can find out where to buy the 'Early Fairport Tapes' from our small ads column. I understand that none of the members of Fairport attempted to impede the release of this tape, because they thought it should be

Geoffrey Tyrell



OVER THE GARDEN WALL

THE MOST PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE IN ROCK

zigzag readers' poll - October 1976

- 1 RADIO ONE / BBC PLAYLIST
- 2 THE GOOD OLD MELODY MAKER
- 3 TOP OF THE POPS
- 4 MONEY (too much or too little)
- 5 SYNTHESISERS / MELLOTRONS
- 6 DISCO MUSIC AND FUNK
- 7 HUGE VENUES
- 8 TONY BLACKBURN (sorry, Tone!)
- 9 EXPENSIVE HI-FI
- 10 MULTI TRACK STUDIOS
- 11 THE HIGH COST OF ALBUMS
- 12 RESPECTABILITY
- 13 HEROIN
- 14 BAY CITY ROLLERS
- 15 THE MARINE OFFENCES ACT
- 16 YES AND E.L.P.
- 17 SUPERSTARS & SUPERSTARDOM
- 18 JAZZ AND JAZZ ROCK
- 19 COCAINE
- 20 TECHNO-FLASH WIZARDRY
- 21 PUNK ROCK
- 22 SHITTY QUALITY VINYL USED
- 23 TAX EXILES
- 24 RELIGION
- 25 BEER AND BEER CANS
- 26 HEAVY METAL MUSIC
- 27 NEW FACES
- 28 GLAM / GLITTER / ART ROCK
- 29 RE-RELEASES
- 30 THE OLD BOY CORRUPTION NETWORK
- 31 EXCESSIVE VOLUME at CONCERTS
- 32 LYSERGIC ACID
- 33 REGGAE
- 34 DRUM SOLOS ("oolya oolya")
- 35 TOMMY
- 36 CONCEPT ALBUMS
- 37 DRY ICE
- 38 JONATHAN KING
- 39 SO IT GOES TELEVISION SHOW
- 40 THE WEEKLY CHARTS

Other interesting suggestions:

CHUCK BERRY'S JAIL SENTENCE
DEATH OF THE HAND JIVE
AGED HEROES WHO DON'T KNOW
WHEN TO PACK IT IN
ROCK CONCERTS BEGINNING TO
RESEMBLE FOOTBALL MATCHES
PILLARS IN FRONT OF SEATS
THE THAMES VALLEY POLICE
DAILY MIRROR POP CLUB
ADVERTS quoting glowing reviews

available for interested parties. As one who recalls those halcyon days at the Country Club, listening to Fairport Convention playing all those Leonard Cohen, Richard Farina and Jackson Frank songs, this tape fascinates me and though it's mono, they are good studio recordings. That early group was a magic combination, it really was... and never forget one thing. Without Fairport playing an entirely free benefit concert for us - Zigzag would have folded ignominiously in October 1969, after 6 issues. Play it again, Sam.

Peter O'Brien of Omaha Rainbow just phoned me to read out a telegram he'd received from John Stewart. After several months without a contract, he's signed with RSO Records and will be going into the studio soon. Excellent news - but I think they should let him choose the producer this time around.

O'Brien and I recently interviewed John Phillips after years of trying to track him down. We just caught him before he whirled back to the States, clutching the songs he recorded at Olympic. Having given our word, we can't publish our conversations until his new album is released - sometime in the New Year... but can you imagine what he sounds like, backed by the Rolling Stones, and produced by Mick Jagger? Startling to say the least!

Omaha has just put out a Kursaal Flyers Special: 35p inc. post from 10 Lesley Court, Harcourt Road, Wallington, Surrey.

For the poll this month, I'd like to know the SINGER/MUSICIAN/FILM or TV STAR you'd MOST LIKE TO GO TO BED WITH. (I was going to say that "sex is unimportant", but I'll change that to "gender is unimportant"). Choose TEN, list them in order of preference (please list names rather than groups - gang bangs are excluded because of the confusion they would cause in collating the results), and send them off to me: c/o Yeoman Cottage, North Marston, Buckingham MK18 3PH, as usual.

And now, gentle readers, it's competition time. Along with your bed partner list, please send an explanation of why you'd like to sleep with your particular list topper. Since I have no intention of either publishing or disclosing these revelations. They can be as explicit as you wish... and the person who sends the most interesting will win chart-topping Nick Lowe's old boots, which you see up there.

Long have I admired Nick's old boots - which is why, when he decided to pension them off in favour of a brand new pair of snappy duo-tone Johnsonian Walking-out shoes, he thoughtfully asked if I could find them a good home. These, of course, are no ordinary boots: imbued with the perspiration of six summers, they have tramped famous boards from the Tally Ho to the Rainbow; they have scuffed the pavements of Amsterdam and trod the rich loam of Laurel Canyon; they've been in Transits and Tridents, seen action in fair weather and foul, and have stood quaking in the presence of Paul McCartney himself; they've left their unique sawbo tread patterns on the parquet flooring of studios across the globe; and have snuggled beneath the beds of some of the world's loveliest ladies.

The winner will have his return fare paid to London to meet Nick and to visit the offices of his record company, Stiff Records. He or she will also meet famous journalists and other people, and go to a London gig free. Nick will then present the lucky winner with the old boots and we will all wave him/her off on his/her train home. Roxette snapper Geoff Tyrell will photograph the moment for posterity. If the winner feels too inhibited to participate in such buffoonery, we'll send the boots by post... just mark your entry with "No publicity please".

OK... get your quills out this very minute and get moving... and I must also get moving - I have a most important engagement this evening.

I pawned my Smith Corona.

Rear Admiral Mac Garry

Elton John Blue Moves

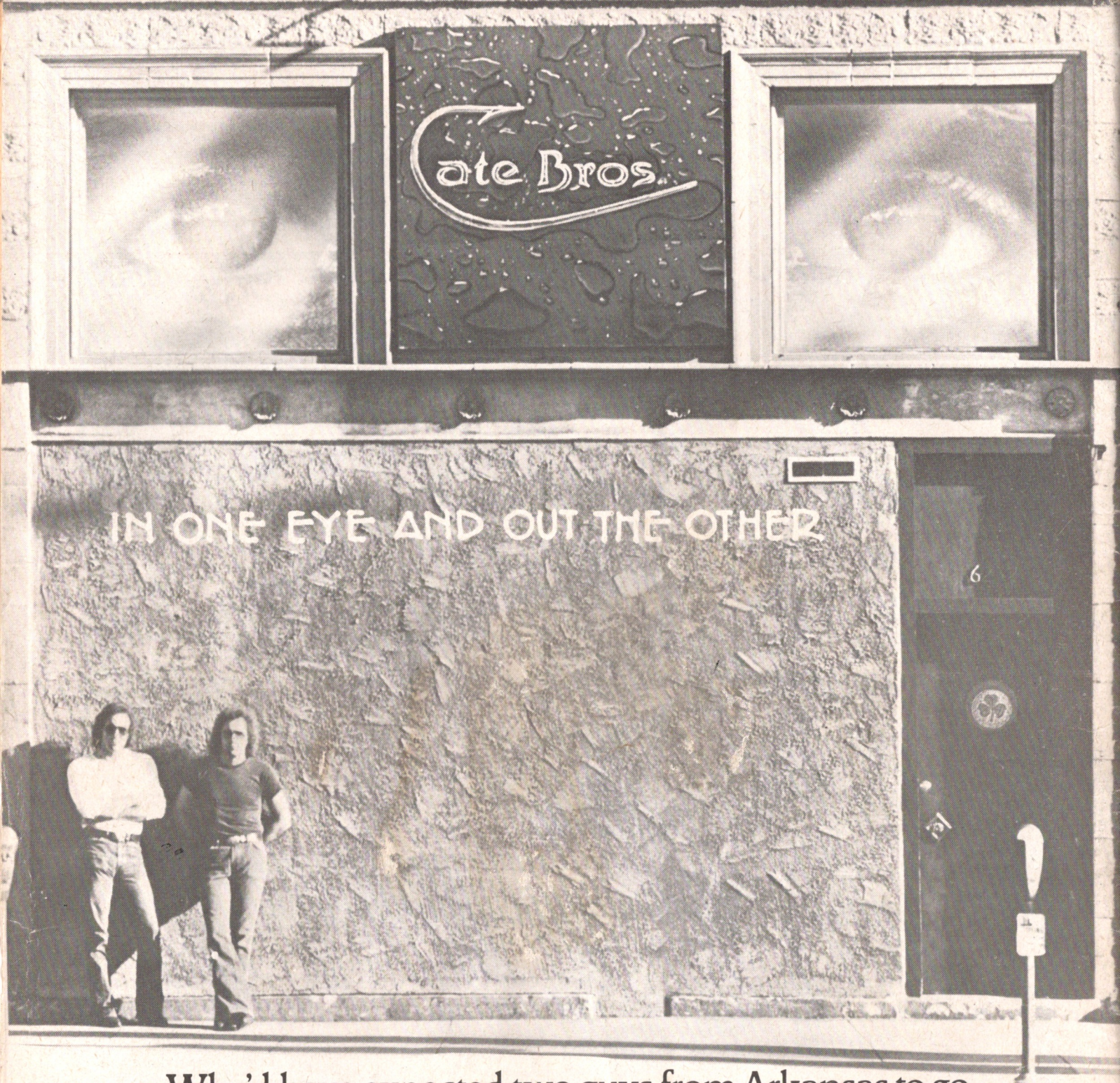


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